AN ORGANIC-PROPHETIC-LIBERATION MODEL OF SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT:

AN ADVENTIST ETHICAL RESPONSE TO CONTEMPORARY MORAL ISSUES

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ABSTRACT

An Organic-Prophetic-Liberation Model of Social Engagement: An Adventist
Ethical Response to Contemporary Moral Issues

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The purpose of this professional project was to design a model of moral
theology derived from the legacy of an Adventist theological heritage and
based upon the works of contemporary theological ethicists. It begins with an
empirical analysis of moral issue articles within two Seventh-day Adventist
journals, Ministry Magazine and Message Magazine, over the period from Fall
2001 through December 2005. Next, a conceptual analysis is undertaken of the
theological model that informs moral judgments within these journals. The
conclusions of the analysis are that the model of moral theology is legalistic in its
commitment to an inflexible and literalistic biblicism.

In addition to critiquing the model for moral theology within these journals,
the model of moral theology offered by Immanuel Kant is reviewed and found to
be inadequate for providing a viable alternative. This is because it too is
legalistic in its commitment to an inflexible rationalism.

What is offered as a viable alternative for a robust Adventist moral
theology is one that takes seriously the Adventist heritage by organically binding
moral imperatives to prima facie biblical principles that emerge from major
biblical motifs. Moreover, this model incorporates the Adventist prophetic
witness to oppressive contexts. This is the organic-prophetic-liberation model of
social engagement.

Finally, an example article on the moral problem of legislating race relations is presented to illustrate how an organic-prophetic-liberation model of moral theology can inform articles that address moral issues in Christian journals.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

<u>Problem Addressed by the Project</u>

This project critiques an unsuitable engagement of contemporary moral

issues as illustrated by two significant, official Seventh-day Adventist church

publications: <u>Message Magazine</u> and <u>Ministry Magazine</u>. The articles in these

journals fail to 1) satisfactorily address the range of contemporary moral

problems, 2) develop an adequate method for deriving the ethical principles

that form the basis for resolving moral problems, and 3) find creative ways to

revision their identifying "remnant" metaphor in ways that might mobilize radical

engagement in solving moral problems. I argue that the problems in these

Adventist journal articles result from an inadequate model for (and lead to an

anemic response to) social engagement.

<u>Importance of the Problem</u>

For this project, I have chosen to focus on two Adventist journal

publications.[1] First, <u>Ministry Magazine</u> is an official denominational publication

that reaches every Adventist pastor in the United States of America. Its stated

purpose is to reach every English-speaking denominational working territory and

its charter opens with the recognition that "the obvious need of the hour is an

effective ministry to challenge the sinful conscience of a judgment-bound

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[1] There are other publications that are not included in this study (e.g., <u>Adventist Review</u>, <u>Spectrum</u>, <u>Adventist Today</u>, <u>Signs of the Times</u>, etc). These journals were not chosen either because they are unofficial magazines or are news magazines for the most part. I am concerned with journals that Black American pastors might consider indispensable to their professional enrichment.

world."[2] The second, <u>Message Magazine</u>, was selected because it is the largest official Adventist magazine in the United States targeting an African-American Adventist audience. This magazine was founded during the reconstruction era in order to respond to the conditions of the recently freed slaves. Its stated mission continues to include effecting "positive life-change and passionate virtuous living for today and eternity."[3] Given the history of Blacks in America, one expects an alternative voice to emerge on social issues within this journal. According to former editor Delbert W. Baker, <u>Message</u> "has responded faithfully to the social, domestic, and spiritual needs of Black people in the United States and around the globe."[4]

This project grew out of my realization that in neglecting to address many contemporary moral concerns, these journals might also fail to address their proclaimed purpose: "to challenge the sinful conscience of a judgment-bound world" and/or produce "positive life-change and passionate virtuous living for today and eternity." In addition, these journals address moral topics in ways that are not responsive to the changing social context. The magazines' constant focus on the moral dimensions of sex in numerous articles creates a certain

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[2] L. E. Froom, "Our Apology and Our Authorization," <u>Ministry Magazine</u>, Jan. 1928, 32.

[3] About Us, "The Mission of Message Magazine," <u>Message Magazine</u>, July 2006 [online]; accessed 21 Jan. 2007; available from http://www.messagemagazine.org/index.php.

[4] Delbert W. Baker, "100 Years Old and Counting," <u>Message Magazine</u>, July 2006 [online]; accessed 21 Jan. 2007; available from http://www.messagemagazine.org/article.php?id=22.

redundancy, and their trivial handling of other subjects of moral import weakens their relevance for a 21st century disciple of Jesus.

As I reflected on the contents of these flagship magazines, a perception grew that the prophetic heritage of the Advent-Movement may be in a state of crisis. When denominational journals serve as a reader's digest for pastors (who have precious little time), it is important that these magazines are useful and provide sources of information relevant to the pressing issues of the day. The current state of affairs calls for timely, relevant, accessible, and inexpensive materials that serve as a reminder of an early Adventist prophetic heritage and its commitment to social justice.

The need for meaningful and prophetic engagement is more apparent and acute in the post 9-11 global context. Popular news journalists and scholars of current events are raising questions about the role of the American empire and its relationship to issues of global justice.[5] There are emerging ethical concerns that come with the move toward globalization. It has become imperative to provide a more agile response to the changing social, political, and economic context. Christian movements that claim a prophetic heritage are called to be at the forefront of society to bring into focus the ethical implications of the gospel on matters of contemporary social justice.

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[5] See Andrew J. Bacevich, American Empire: The Realities and Consequences of U.S. Diplomacy (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002). See also Cornel West, Democracy Matters: Winning the Fight Against Imperialism (New York: Penguin Press, 2004), and David Ray Griffin, John Cobb, Jr. et al. , The American Empire and the Commonwealth of God: A Political, Economic, Religious Statement (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006).

Another personal and cultural motivation for this project centers on the history of pastoral ministry within Black-American Christianity. The social heritage of the Black-American Adventist pastor is largely rooted in the institution of the Black Church that has its roots embedded in slave religion. Slave religion, as an incarnation of Christianity among the displaced, degraded, and socially oppressed Black peoples of the western hemisphere, modeled the Christian theme of social justice and liberation.[6] The manifestation of the Christian faith under such harsh conditions as American slavery gave form to a religious critique of dominant Christian practices of the day, which was judged as idolatrous and anti-Christian. Authentic expressions of Black Christianity in American Adventism cannot dispense with embracing the heritage that confronted and challenged social oppression.

Furthermore, this project is motivated by the idea that the vocational mandate of an Adventist pastor is defined by the Advent-Movement. More than any commitment to denominational institutions, Adventist pastors must recognize a deeper commitment to the Advent-Movement. This movement is rooted in the call to "prepare the way of the Lord."[7] Like the prophetic work and ministry of John the Baptist, this preparing the way of the Lord also implies continuous prophetic work. The prophetic voice is inseparably intertwined with social justice

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[6] Albert J. Raboteau, Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978).
[7] The ministry of John the Baptist was clearly understood by the evangelists to be one that prepared the way for the manifestation of the first advent (see Matthew 3:1-17; Mark 1:1-9; Luke 3:1-20; John 1:15-40).

issues and Kingdom of God metaphors. Social awareness is essential to effective prophetic-centered pastoral ministry.[8]

This history provides the context for the theological commitment of a Black-American Adventist pastor that is shaped in large part by the marriage of Black social heritage with the Advent-Movement. Both of these identity markers are related to pledges of working for a more just order among people in this world. In the social justice legacies of Black social heritage and the Advent-Movement, there remains a refusal to allow religious life to be privatized and individualized. Our Adventist theological commitment and Black social heritage can never afford to lose its footing with the temporal social needs of "righteousness."

For a Black Adventist pastor whose religious heritage is shaped by the impulses toward justice rooted in Slave Religion and the social action of the early Advent-Movement, issues of social justice are central to matters of faith. Yet this emphasis on theology, ethics, and culture seems to have been lost in the publication of one of the journals in particular: Message Magazine. Since the primary target audience of Message Magazine is the Black-American Seventh-day Adventist constituency, the reader can expect that this journal's articles will address social justice matters. Unfortunately, its treatment is inadequate whenever it does attempt to respond to the changing moral context.

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[8] William M. Ramsay, Four Modern Prophets: Walter Rauschenbusch, Martin Luther King, Jr. Gustavo Gutierrez, Rosemary Radford Ruether (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1986), 1-7.

Nevertheless, for a Black Adventist pastor, by virtue of vocational mandate, social heritage, and theological commitment, being informed about issues of social justice is a priority for a lived faith experience.

Finally, the problem of the inadequate treatment of moral issues in these denominational journals raises the question of ethics in media as it relates to these journals. Can these journals stand up to a thoroughgoing, comprehensive and in-depth critique, given the premises that each journal accepts about their historic roots in a prophetic movement? In other words, can the journals purport to be Christian magazines of a movement that proclaims a prophetic heritage without being prophetic in responding to the emerging context for 21st century moral issues? It is important for Adventist publications to bind the Christian sacred story to today's ethical imperatives with a prophetic voice of liberation for the oppressed.

<u>Thesis</u>

This project articulates an organic-prophetic-liberation model of social engagement, which draws on the prophetic self-understanding of the Adventist Christian heritage while also highlighting the work of contemporary theological ethicists for the purpose of writing a moral issues article that expresses for readers of Seventh-day Adventist journal publications a more faithful, authentic, and relevant Adventist ethical response to contemporary moral issues.

<u>Definitions of Terms</u>

<u>Prophet/Prophetic</u>—Drawing on the image of the biblical prophet who spoke against injustice, the term prophetic in this work refers to the voice within

the social-cultural-political landscape that critically engages the moral dimension of the human experience and offers an empowering vision of a greater future.[9] Here the term "voice" is not limited to the individual spoken word but includes written materials and community activity that speaks forth against injustice within the present order. The term "prophetic" is not to be confused with "apocalyptic," which, in contrast, presents a vision of the future that abandons hope in this world and looks to another realm to rescue Christians from the oppression of this world.[10] The primary role of the biblical prophet was not to foretell the future but to speak against present injustice.

Advent-Movement—The term Advent-Movement refers to the wider association of groups who believe that it is important for Christians to prepare the way for the parousia/return of the Christ. The Advent-Movement, an outgrowth of 19th century Millerites, gave rise to many organizations (the Seventh-day Adventist Church is one of the largest).

Organic—This term refers to the necessary and dynamic nexus between the formative, generative, and constitutive expressions of moral theology within the context of biblical studies and the guiding ethical principles derived from the narratives and themes dominant within Sacred Scripture. This term provides a deep examination of moral commitment from a real-life embodied narrative contextual approach.

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[9] This model of prophetic work is exemplified in biblical figures such as Amos, Micah, and Hosea. See Walter Brueggemann, The Prophetic Imagination, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 3.

[10] Elizabeth Achtemeier, Preaching Hard Texts of the Old Testament (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998), 151-55.

<u>Work Previously Done in the Field</u>

Seventh-day Adventism has a long tradition of responding to social

concerns. One such example is its investment in its health ministries that arose in

the mid 19ᵗʰ century. Andy Lampkin explores this development from its early

period through times of crisis and new possibilities for the Adventist churches'

health ministry program. He focuses the lessons of this history on the

contemporary challenges of globalization.[11] He indicates that although the

Seventh-day Adventist Church was not the initiating voice of health reform, the

church participated in the mid 19ᵗʰ century cultural and social preoccupation

with health reform that was already underway. This social milieu provides the

contextual springboard for understanding the moral import of Adventist health

ministries. His work relates to this study by showing how Adventism has joined

moral campaigns and enriched them.

Others have written on a range of moral issues that pertain to the life and

writings of Seventh-day Adventists. Michael Pearson primarily discusses Adventist

sexual attitudes in his attempt to broaden the reader's understanding of a

neglected aspect of ethical development within Adventism.[12] From a broad

historical survey, he analyzes both sociological and theological implications of a

selected number of topics related to love, sex, and marriage. Pearson's study

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[11] Andy Lampkin, <u>A Critical Study of the Seventh-day Adventist Health Teaching Tradition in Light of the Contemporary Situation of Public Health and Globalization</u>, Ph.D. diss., Vanderbilt University, 2000 (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI, 2000), 9996260.
[12] Michael Pearson, <u>Millennial Dreams and Moral Dilemmas: Seventh-day Adventism and Contemporary Ethics</u> (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

provides raw data on Adventist sensibilities toward, and obsession about, "purity" in sexual matters.

Douglas Morgan challenges the notion that Adventists remained aloof from engaging in social issues. He observes that the Adventist church was active and engaged in social justice issues despite its apocalyptic foundations.[13] The Adventist response is impressive in view of the movement's millenarian roots. However, he recognizes that Adventist participation has been a history full of ambiguity. The involvement in selective social issues showed an inconsistency about which issues Adventists should confront and why. There are also questions as to whether the Adventist voice challenged the moral questions on principle or simply called for moderating certain moral stances in practice. In addition, he wrote an article highlighting the Adventist voice that challenged the United States when it was inconsistent in its stand for liberty.[14] My work addresses this ambiguous legacy as manifested in Adventist journals that are directed toward pastoral readers.

George R. Knight highlights the internal and external tensions facing early Adventism on the question of war.[15] Knight points out the middle-ground position that Adventists took between militarism and pacifism: what Adventists called

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[13] Douglas Morgan, <u>Adventism and the American Republic: The Public Involvement of a Major Apocalyptic Movement</u> (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2001).

[14] Douglas Morgan, "Adventism, Apocalyptic, and the Cause of Liberty," <u>Church History</u> 63 (June 1994): 235-49.

[15] George R. Knight, "Adventism and Military Service: Individual Conscience in Ethical Tension," in <u>Proclaim Peace: Christian Pacifism from Unexpected Quarters</u>, ed. T. Schlabach and R. Hughes (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 157-71.

"conscientious cooperation." According to Knight, the moral compass for addressing this issue was a quasi-Divine Command Theory, where the Sabbath commandment and the commandment against killing shaped the discussion for finding a moral imperative regarding warfare.

In the end, the official positions provided only meager guidance for individual Adventists on (1) their moral obligation in times of war, (2) their moral stance towards war, and (3) the moral implications/ramifications of war. This inconsistency seems to be evident in reference to military service or national warfare. This work helps to identify the dimensions of ambivalence in Adventist moral voices.

Timothy L. Smith surveys the roots of social reform movements within American Christianity.[16] He explores the relationship between revivalism and social reform movements. His work focuses on the consequences of the rhetoric and action of religious visions of America. He believes that an idealistic vision of America is in part rooted in the Methodist ideal of perfectionism. According to Smith, the perfectionist ideal was a firm belief that united goal-oriented social groups could correct historical trajectories. He believes that this ideal in part shaped the Adventist reaction to what kind of vision provides reasonable and realistic possibilities of social reform. The larger Wesleyan context for understanding the Adventist response to contemporary social justice issues, with

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[16] Timothy L. Smith, "Social Reform," in The Rise of Adventism: Religion and Society in Mid-Nineteenth Century America, ed. E. S. Gaustad (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), 18-29.

its own tension between idealism and realism, relates somewhat to the Adventist tension between being a purely apocalyptic movement and a prophetic movement.

<div align="center">Scope and Limitations of the Project</div>

This project limits its focus to two significant Adventist journals and in particular their articles dealing with contemporary moral issues as they emerge within today's context of globalization. Time and resources do not allow investigating all the journals published by Adventist publishing houses. Therefore, it is reasonable to limit the research to those journals that have the potential to reach every Black-American Seventh-day Adventist pastor. This work will supplement the resources of the Black-American Adventist pastor. This study deals with the demands of pastoral ministry to become a vocational public intellectual/theologian. It responds to the need for a model that provides a user-friendly approach to evaluate journal articles that relate to social justice issues. The scope of the survey will be limited to Message and Ministry Magazine articles in issues from Fall 2001 to December 2005.

The project culminates in a sample article that addresses the moral problem of legislating race relations. This is done in the spirit of Cornel West, who embodies the public theologian/intellectual social activist, combining theological ethics with the virtues of a prophetic vocation from the Black-American Christian context. There are other viable responses to this problem such as designing an alternative voice or publication as a print or on-line journal. However, this project will be limited to creating a dialogue that might be useful

for conversations, workshops, or seminars for pastors and other persons who will publish journals for the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

<u>Procedure for Integration</u>

This project seeks to integrate the world of theology (as it is informed by the context of an Adventist faith heritage) and the world of denominational publishing. Not only does it concern itself with the sacred story and tradition of Adventist Christianity, but it also demonstrates a concern for the aims of moral philosophy and the issue of ethics in print media. Together, these conceptual/theoretical concerns shape the real-world practice of writing and reading articles from a moral perspective, as engaged in by a pastor pledged to the Adventist heritage.

In this study, I analyze the way moral issues are framed and what ethical principles predominate in the two selected denominational journals. Here, I evaluate how the treatment proves to be inadequate and call for an alternative approach. In order to construct an adequate theological ethic and develop the groundwork for an Adventist theological ethic, the works of various more recent theological ethicists can serve as resources. I review the works of contemporary ethicists and draw on these works in order to provide the foundations for a moral theology model. Furthermore, I research the biblical principles of social justice that have historically informed the Advent-Movement.

My approach was as follows:

(1) I designed a model based on principles set forward by the writings of theological ethicists, the public prophetic intellectual persona as exemplified in

the vocation of Cornel West, and the rich heritage of Adventism. This model informs the design of educational materials that seek to communicate key principles, goals, and expectations of pastors and those who write for and publish Seventh-day Adventist journals.

(2) I invited trusted colleagues in the pastoral ministry, theological training centers, writers, and editors to review the materials.

(3) Finally, using the feedback from these colleagues and sources, I redesigned the model/materials with a view towards introducing the concepts to a wide-ranging audience of Adventist church members.

<u>Chapter Outlines</u>

Chapter 1 states the thesis of the project, discusses the importance of the problem, and defines technical terms.

Chapter 2 investigates articles within <u>Ministry Magazine</u> and <u>Message Magazine</u> and assesses those topics that deal with contemporary moral issues. This chapter provides evidence for the claim that there is a need for a vigorous Adventist ethical response to the changing context of contemporary moral issues. I demonstrate that the apparent Adventist apocalyptic vision embedded in the approaches to ethics in these journals poorly informs the Adventist reader of alternative responses to contemporary moral problems.

Chapter 3 explores the theological ethics of Immanuel Kant. Its purpose is to demonstrate how the assumptions and methods embedded in the Kantian revolution in philosophy have negatively affected theological ethics. Kant's *a priori* non-contextual approach to moral philosophy renders anemic the robust

ethical activism of Christian commitment. This analysis will suggest caution for the theological ethicist who tries to ignore the Sacred Scripture as a resource in constructing moral principles. Furthermore, it challenges the mechanical approaches of the enlightenment tradition. Because I argue that rationalism is not the model for theological ethics, I take on Immanuel Kant's moral philosophy and the theological implications derived from it. This critique highlights how Kant brings about a pivotal turn for the worse in the discipline of theological ethics. I describe the result of his work as creating a divorce of theological ethics from a commitment to the sources of the Christian Sacred Scriptures and discuss the negative implications this has for constructing a theological ethic.

Chapter 4 surveys the theological ethics of Joseph Sittler, Walter Rauschenbusch, Reinhold Niebuhr, H. Richard Niebuhr, Paul Tillich, JoAnne Marie Terrell, and Cornel West. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a theological basis for framing the moral imperatives for Christian social engagement. It will be shown that, together, these Christian ethicists provide the resources to construct a suitable model for social engagement that is organically tied to the Sacred Scriptures, is prophetically celebratory, and is produces liberation. These sources share a formative role in generating the organic-prophetic-liberation model of social engagement. In addition, I show that this model is embedded in a larger heritage of Adventist thought and action by recalling some historical and theological highpoints of the Adventist movement and social engagement. The aim is to show ways the Adventist movement has engaged social problems that approximate the framework of organic-prophetic-liberation.

Chapter 5 takes on the moral problem of legislating race relations in an attempt to show how moral theology can bring a fine distinction in perspective on the discussion and to propose resolutions that both challenge the Bible while using it as a resource for challenging the current climate. The organic-prophetic-liberation model is put into action in this essay as an example of how writers might compose articles on contemporary moral issues guided by this model.

CHAPTER 2

The Problem of Adventism When Engaging Contemporary Moral Issues:
The Case of Two Official Journals

<u>On Moral Philosophy's Relation to Theology</u>

One of the many ways to respond to moral problems is to inform people about the harms and injustices that result from pursuing a particular course of action. Whenever religious journals take on moral issues, critical reflection becomes indispensable if they are to become a reliable source of information and guidance for a lived faith experience in moral decision-making.[1] The very preconditions for the community of faith to redress moral ills are undermined if these journals lack a judicious examination of morality. A review of articles addressing contemporary moral issues in two significant journals printed by Seventh-day Adventist publishing houses reveals insufficient analysis and treatment when informing readers on ethical matters.

Before providing a critique of the journal articles, it is important to review the discipline of moral philosophy in general. What is the nature of that human behavior we call moral? Do the terms 'must,' 'should,' and 'ought' have a universal sense or are they as relative to our cultures as our tastes in food? Is it possible to do normative ethics or are we limited to merely describing the subjective beliefs and practices of human beings? These questions and others are addressed by moral philosophers in their attempt to understand the nature

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[1] Refer to footnotes 2 and 3 in the previous chapter for the mission statement and purpose of the journals under consideration.

of the moral imperative and reconcile it with our moral intuitions. This overview will help to guide our appraisal of the treatment that moral concerns receive within these journals.

Ethics or moral philosophy/theology is concerned with two central questions, i.e., what is 'good' and what is 'right'.[2] The moral philosopher understands the importance of establishing the necessary and sufficient conditions for right action in order to support the claims of normative ethics. The question regarding what is 'good' is called the theory of value and has priority over the question of what is 'right'. The question regarding what is right is considered the theory of obligation and is contingent upon the answer to what theory of value one comes to accept.

As a discipline of study, ethics is divided into three major categories.[3] The first category, descriptive ethics, is the study of those beliefs about right and wrong that individuals and groups hold to be true. This approach to studying ethics is often taken by anthropologists, psychologists, and sociologists. It is not concerned with what people ought to believe about right and wrong, good and evil. It is only concerned with the factual question of what they do in fact believe on these questions.[4] It simply names our moral intuitions.

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[2] Nina Rosenstand, <u>The Moral of the Story: An Introduction to Ethics</u>, 5th ed. (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2006), chaps 1 and 3.
[3] Jacques P. Thiroux and Keith W. Krasemann, <u>Ethics: Theory and Practice</u>, 9th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2007), 6-10.
[4] Thiroux and Krasemann, 6.

The second category, normative ethics, is the study of what people ought to believe about the questions of goodness and righteousness.[5] This approach tries to reconcile our subjective moral intuitions with those objective moral values that are implied in moral practice. From the study of normative ethics, a third approach to moral philosophy/theology emerges, i.e., applied ethics. The third category is that study of morality that attempts to apply the ethical theories or systems of the normative ethicist to practical situations.[6]

A major dispute in the study of ethics is whether moral norms are objective or merely subjective and relative to individuals and cultures. While it is not necessary in this context to revisit the arguments, it must be pointed out that this dispute is what makes moral theories central to the study of ethics. Because of the normative nature of this essay, the descriptive ethical theories in the study of ethics are a given but only as a foothold for further investigation. By themselves, they do not go far enough. In going beyond simply describing what the moral beliefs about right and wrong are within the two Adventist journals—toward providing a critical evaluation of the principles invoked in coming to decisions— examination of the methods of deriving guiding moral principles becomes a priority for this study.

We can see that the range of moral theories stretches from the pole of ethical absolutism/objectivism to the pole of ethical relativism/subjectivism. It is in this range of moral theories that two normative doctrines emerge; that is, the

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[5] Thiroux and Krasemann, 6-7.
[6] Thiroux and Krasemann, 7-9.

consequentialist and nonconsequentialist dogmas for developing a theory of right action. The consequentialist propensity focuses on the end of an act in order to decide what action is right: the right thing to do is that which maximizes good ends and minimizes evil ends. In contrast, the nonconsequentialist inclination focuses on the means to the end of an act, namely, the right thing to do is that which is motivated by the right reasons for acting. From these and other thought experiments, a list of ethical theories have emerged (e.g., ethical egoism, utilitarianism, ethical relativism, Kantian ethics, divine command theory ethics, natural law ethics, virtue ethics, etc.).

A cursory survey of the articles in the journals under study may lead to the conclusion that there is very little serious treatment of ethics in these journals. Too many articles, especially in <u>Message Magazine</u>, provide a trivial treatment of moral issues. Therefore, I have taken a liberal approach to my investigation, including in this survey articles that on the surface seem to contribute minimally in their treatment of ethics. The need for such a liberal inclusion further makes the point that these journals are impoverished in addressing current moral matters. See Appendices A and B for a list of articles that were surveyed in this analysis.

It cannot be denied that many articles are inclined toward moral exhortation with the frequent use of words like "ought," "should," "must," and so forth. Nevertheless, in the greater portion of these articles, the reasons behind the ethical imperatives are not made explicit. Furthermore, the method for deriving moral principles is hard to nail down. The implicit logic appears to follow a peculiar line of reasoning; that is, "because Christians should be moral and you

are Christians, then you should act in such a way with regard to 'x'." The hidden premise is that "acting in such a way" is the right moral choice. Oftentimes this premise presupposes some proof text method of biblical justification. This is an approach to engendering moral principles, which I term "legalistic biblicism." It becomes clear from this picture of how moral issues are often treated that isolating those articles that are explicit in their moral justifications, and not simply explicit in the moral claims they make, might provide some insight into the wider problems of treating moral topics within these journals. In the appendices, I have put an asterisk by those articles that were more closely reviewed.

These publications, as stated in their mission statements and their proclaimed intent, are understood by Adventists to play a role in moral education. The religious form of life expresses its logic in much the same manner as the moral form of life. In fact, for many theologians and philosophers, religious language belongs to the category of moral discourse and not to the category of metaphysical discourse. For the practical theologian, i.e., the pastor, the questions of moral discussions are central to monitoring how well these journals express the religious way of living and how clearly they recognize the very nature of what it means to talk religiously.

<u>An Insufficient Survey of Contemporary Moral Issues</u>

A critical look at <u>Ministry Magazine</u> and <u>Message Magazine</u> reveals that they fail to provide an adequate survey of contemporary moral issues. Thomas Wall's book, entitled <u>Thinking Critically about Moral Problems</u>, provides what might be considered reasonably fair categories for beginning a survey of

contemporary moral issues. His moral taxonomy groups contemporary moral issues into the following types: (1) moral problems concerned with life and death; namely, capital punishment, abortion, euthanasia, (2) moral problems concerned with social justice; that is, affirmative action, global hunger, treatment of animals, war/terrorism, and (3) moral problems concerned with sex and reproduction; for example, gay marriage, pornography censorship, and reproductive technologies.[7]

From the Fall 2001 issue of Ministry Magazine until Fall 2005, there are approximately 30 articles with titles explicitly indicating to readers that the subject matter pertains to contemporary moral issues. The total number of articles for this same period that use the words "ethical" or "moral" or allude to moral concerns with some elementary reflection number more than 70, including editorials. A review of these articles will reveal that titles can be deceptive indicators of the content within the articles. An example of this is observed in Will Eva's editorial entitled "Holy Wars," which has more to do with church partisanship and how to maintain doctrinal purity than it does with how to view the current military conflict. In this case, the title is used as a pretext for an unexpected subject of discussion.[8] Another example of the unreliability of a title is seen in Clarence Hodges' article in Message Magazine, entitled "Terrorism of a

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[7] Thomas F. Wall, Thinking Critically about Moral Problems (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2003), vii-x. See also Daniel Bonevac, Today's Moral Issues: Classic and Contemporary Perspectives, 5th ed. (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2006) or Bruce N. Waller, Consider Ethics: Theory, Readings, and Contemporary Issues (New York: Pearson/Longman, 2005).

[8] Will Eva, "Holy Wars?" Ministry Magazine, Jan. 2002, 4.

Different Sort."[9] In this article, the title leads one to think the discussion is about the social justice problem of war, when in fact it is a discussion about the injustice of racial discrimination in the hiring of African-American football coaches.

So then, the apparent large number of articles gives the impression that there is a reasonable amount of space that the journal commits to addressing moral issues. Yet, upon further investigation, the range of moral topics treated within the magazines demonstrates a reductive version of moral concerns. A table of the explicit titles on moral topics in Ministry Magazine's articles exposes an imbalance, in that the journal addresses certain moral issues while neglecting to address others.

Table 1. Ministry Magazine Articles Addressing Moral Issues, Sept. '01-Dec. '05

Category of Moral Issue	Total Number of Articles For Each Year				
	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Issues of Life and Death	0	0	0	0	0
Issues of Social Justice	0	3	1	1	3
Issues of Sex and Reproduction	0	2	1	8	5
Ethical Theory in General	0	2	1	0	2

Among the article titles that were included in issues concerned with social justice, three out of eight were dealing with the subject matter that concerned

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[9] Clarence Hodges, "Terrorism of a Different Sort," Message Magazine, May/June, 2005, 20; 29.

the public health problem of addiction.[10] This table shows that during this five-year period there were no articles with titles indicating a concern for moral issues related to life and death via abortion, euthanasia, or capital punishment. If the titles are any indication about the journal's commitment to a broad-ranging survey of contemporary moral issues, then we can see from the titles alone that morality is reduced to concerns about sexual misconduct and substance abuse or co-dependency, for the most part. More than half of the articles that dealt with moral issues during this period dealt with the moral concern of sex.

It might be wise to distinguish personal ethics from social ethics at this point in the discussion. In the sense that private moral issues are always relevant to a life devoted to holiness (and also relevant to a morality of aspiration, namely, one that goes beyond simple obligations), the moral concerns regarding sex and drugs are not to be discounted. However, if a reader is looking for an Adventist moral perspective to guide them in responding to the changing social, political, and economic climate, then a preoccupation with topics like sex and drugs can wrongly conceptualize them as problems of personal responsibility can wrongly conceive them as problems of personal responsibility, as though they happen in a vacuum. In other words, in the context of current global affairs, the question of how to deal with drug offenders cannot

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[10] Cf. Marvin Moore, "Recovery and Pastoral Ministry," Ministry Magazine, Jan. 2002, 20; Linda Royer, "Every Church Can Help Smokers Quit," Ministry Magazine, Dec. 2003, 24; Andrew J. Weaver and Howard W. Stone, "Teen Smoking: The Church Can Help," Ministry Magazine, Nov. 2004, 29.

be separated from the problem of the industrial prison complex or whether it is more humane to treat addiction as a medical problem rather than a criminal one. We have not even addressed ancillary issues, such as the concern with drug sales and the role of drug money that funds terrorist campaigns. While we are able to distinguish between personal and social ethics, the emerging context recognizes how these two forces overlap and at times are inseparable.

When it comes to the articles in Message Magazine, the results are not much different than what was found in Ministry Magazine. Although this journal does not solely target the professional clergy, as does Ministry Magazine, still one might expect, in light of its mission statement, that the range of moral concerns would be reflected broadly within its pages. In this journal, what makes an accurate account of the number of articles on moral topics difficult to assess is that there is a considerable amount of moral language in continuously running columns without any depth or sophistication in dealing with these subjects. The articles turn out to be rather marginal treatments. Once again, Clarence Hodges' article provides an example of a list of moral ills combined with an unjustified consequentialist ethic when he attempts to relate the role of self-discipline and the problem of racial discrimination, writing:

> Discipline is needed for victims to overcome. Social discipline will help keep one out of trouble. Problems such as the break up of families, arrests and incarceration, sexual misconduct, unwise pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases, unhealthy lifestyles, and general failures most often result from too little self-discipline.

> Know the rules of society. Before deciding what you should do, evaluate your options, the costs and benefits, before you make decisions regarding family, community, work, entertainment, debt, savings, giving, appearance, and worship.[11]

Here is a clear example of why it can be difficult to decipher the role that ethical analysis plays in these articles. How one moves through the topic of international terrorism, to the problems of racial discrimination in professional football, to the role of self-discipline in overcoming victimization, is puzzling, to say the least.

Therefore, a prudent investigation would focus on those articles that attempt to do more than give a laundry listing of moral ills. With this purpose as a guide, the articles that are worthy of review are those that argue for a specific course of action. When we do this type of survey, we find (as shown by the table below) that Message Magazine has a dismal scorecard on the range of contemporary moral issues. Here again, the table shows zero articles that address moral issues concerned with life and death. Although Message Magazine deals more with the social justice question of racial discrimination, one would expect this finding given the magazine's identity as a journal that concerns African American issues. Table 2 shows the number of articles in the various categories of contemporary moral issues that were featured in Message.

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[11] Hodges, 29.

Table 2. <u>Message Magazine</u> Articles Addressing Moral Issues, Sept. '01-Dec. '05

Category of Moral Issue	Total Number of Articles For Each Year				
	2001	**2002**	**2003**	**2004**	**2005**
Issues of Life and Death	0	0	0	0	0
Issues of Social Justice	1	3	2	4	3
Issues of Sex and Reproduction	0	2	0	2	3
Ethical Theory in General	0	2	4	0	0

Like <u>Ministry Magazine</u>, the survey of moral issues in <u>Message Magazine</u> displays a similar preoccupation with the subject of sexual conduct in the various departmental columns.

<u>An Elusive Method for Engendering Ethical Principles</u>

First, these journals fail to provide an adequate survey of the range of contemporary moral issues framed by the concerns of an emerging new context. Secondly, the method of developing ethical principles for the moral issues that they do address is ambiguous and ambivalent and gives cause for some concern. It is as though Adventist moral theology is undecided and vague about an appropriate methodology for generating guiding moral principles. At this point in the investigation, let's examine the meta-ethical framework employed in providing the foundational rationale for the moral claims asserted in these journal articles.

Once again, we can return to Thomas Wall, who notes that moral reasoning in itself involves different types of levels for figuring out moral problems,

namely: (1) a habitual level, (2) a factual level, (3) a conflict of rules level, and (4) a conflict of principles level.[12] In other words, if a moral problem is analyzed as a problem of habit, while there might not be any question about the proper norm for conduct, there is the need to exhort and provide counsel on how people can change their habits from vices to virtues. Many articles in these journals analyze moral problems as problems of sinful human nature's need to transform from vice to virtue. It might be useful to note how the emphasis of morality at the habitual level could explain the pietistic morality evident in the journals.

What's more, if a moral problem is analyzed, as a problem of gathering accurate facts around a certain matter, then the proper course of action is left unresolved until the relevant facts of the matter are resolved. An example of this would be the current Iraq War and the facts associated with whether there were weapons of mass destruction (WMD). For many people, the facts of the matter are important enough to change their judgment on the proper course of conduct for or against the invasion.

Another way of analyzing moral problems is the conflict-of-rules type of moral problems (where two moral rules could equally apply to the same case with radically differing consequences). The classic cases used for the conflict-of-rules type of moral problem analysis are the anti-Semitic laws of Nazi Germany. Here the problem becomes how one chooses between the rule to 'protect

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[12] Wall, 60-65.

innocent life' over the rule not to lie, if/when asked about the whereabouts of a fellow Jew in hiding.

The level where the focus of this examination centers is the conflict of ethical principles. This is the point where one scrutinizes the question of moral justification by appealing to the ethical principles that inform moral decision-making. Before one can make this move, it is important to have a clear procedure that will guide the formation of moral principles. How does one arrive at a moral principle? This is where meta-ethics comes in. The meta-ethical concern is not with principles *per se* but with uncovering the reasoning behind generating those principles. The role that principles play in helping to inform our decisions is crucial. Moral principles give us user-friendly agility when faced with today's moral problems. As mentioned above, the approach to arriving at moral decision-making in these journals appears to be wedded to a model of legalistic-biblicism. As we will see, rather than approaching moral imperatives from ethical principles *per se*, these journals employ an inflexible and literalistic approach to interpreting the Bible.

Joseph Fletcher is one moral theologian who passionately criticized all legalistic approaches to morality. In his book, Situation Ethics, Fletcher becomes a forerunner of what Christian moral theology would need to develop into in order to be responsive to changing social, political, and economic realities. He understands his approach to ethics as a middle position between a legalistic approach and an antinomian approach. Fletcher's approach prefigures how responsive our reasoning to moral problems can be when we avoid both

legalistic and antinomian approaches to moral decision-making. His method

favors situational approaches.[13] According to him, the role that ethical maxims

or subjective principles play in decisional moments is that of performing

illuminative tasks and not directive tasks when facing a moral situation.[14] Moral

principles, employed this way, have the potential to avoid the absolutism of rigid

legalistic models of ethics and the antinomian models of crass relativism.[15]

While it is more flexible and thereby more responsive to changing

circumstances, it has been argued that Fletcher's model of situational ethics has

its own problems in that he fails to see other alternatives in addition to situation

ethics as middle ground positions between antinomianism and legalism. James

Childress makes this objection when he writes, "It is relatively easy to provide

sound reasons for rejecting both legalism and antinomianism, but it is not so easy

to construct an alternative position that avoids all their problems."[16] Childress

wants to make those subjective principles, i.e., those maxims more binding than

a role reduced to illuminating the situation. He proposes a middle-ground

position for assigning the weight one would give to the role of principles, namely,

a *prima facie* role. He writes:

> The above . . . identifies three major weights assigned to moral
> principles and rules. At one end of the spectrum, principles and
> rules may be absolutely binding; at the other end, they are not
> binding at all but are, at most, illuminative. In between, they may

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[13] Joseph Fletcher, Situation Ethics: The New Morality (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966), 15.
[14] Fletcher, 31.
[15] James F. Childress, "Introduction," in Situation Ethics: The New Morality, by Joseph Fletcher, 1-10.
[16] Childress, 4.

be construed as prima facie binding, that is, binding, "other things being equal." It does not appear to be necessary or possible to fit all moral principles and rules under a single category of bindingness, stringency, or weight.[17]

By extracting/abstracting the binding moral principles that are used to justify decisions about right and wrong, a person avails themself of user-friendly tools to inform responsible moral decision-making. On the one hand, a person can avoid an inflexible appropriation of ancient moral codes to modern moral crisis. On the other hand, a person can avoid putting off plausible moral hypothesis while they await the outcome of complex factual matters that are dependent on investigating the reliability of sources. While on certain points the two disagree, together Fletcher and Childress can help in crafting a different model for Christian moral theology that is more responsive to the changing contexts of 21st century moral problems.

When we add to their basic methodology the technique of Thomas Wall, we are able to construct a heuristic for the remainder of this investigation. For Thomas Wall, ethical principles are derived from a process of reasoning that abstracts moral principles from the shared aim that a family of related ethical theories have in common. Wall abstracts the principle of "Beneficence" from consequentialist ethical theories. All consequentialist ethical theories, be they ethical egoism or utilitarianism or the like, are based on the principle of doing good and avoiding evil. In addition, he abstracts the principle of "Justice" from non-consequentialist ethical theories. Unlike the consequentialist, the non-

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[17] Childress, 4-5.

consequentialist ethical theories are based upon the principle that the means, when it comes to morality, justify the ends. This would be true in Kantian ethics and also in the divine command theory of ethics. Lastly, Wall abstracts the principle of "Autonomy" from Kantian and virtue ethical theory.[18] From this process, Wall provides this prima facie definition of right action: "An action is right if it follows a rule that conforms to the principles of beneficence, justice, and autonomy."[19]

I would alter Wall's proposed definition of right action somewhat trivially this way: "an action is right if it follows a rule or acts in a way that conforms to the principles of beneficence, justice, and liberty." This definition acts as an overarching principle for a *prima facie* theory of obligation; that is, the principles arrived at from rational analysis carry the weight of a binding *prima facie* justification for making moral decisions. This method of analyzing moral problems I will call the "binding *prima facie* rational principium" approach.

In a similar manner, binding principles might be derived from a method of biblical analysis. Let us be clear at this point that this is not a proposal for the inadequate biblical proof-text method. The problems of the biblical proof-text method are obvious when we try to apply it to the contemporary moral problem of abortion rights, for example. For Christians who think simple-mindedly that citing a biblical passage (like Jeremiah 1:5, which states, "Before I formed you in

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[18] Wall, 56-60.
[19] Wall, 60.

the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations") is sufficient to provide a solution to the moral problem of when life with moral status begins, there are numerous other biblical passages to problematize this implied conclusion. For example, Exodus 21:22-23 reads, "When people who are fighting injure a pregnant woman so that there is a miscarriage, and yet no further harm follows, the one responsible shall be fined what the woman's husband demands, paying as much as the judges determine. If any harm follows, then you shall give life for life." This latter passage is an example of a biblical passage that does not define human life as possessing moral status at the fetus stage. Furthermore, this does not address the problematic text of Numbers 5:16-28, in which it appears that the priest would perform a primitive type of abortion ritual on a woman suspected of adultery. I would hold that any moral theology that unreflectively applies the Sacred Scripture to contemporary moral problems by a proof-text methodology is grossly inadequate.

Nonetheless, an interpretive model can abstract moral principles from the aims that a family of related textual narratives, propositions, and themes have in common. Unfortunately, the biblical passages cited in the moral articles from these journals reveal that they are often applied with a legalistic literalism. Yet what we have learned from Fletcher, Childress, and Wall is that the moral imperatives rooted in the texts only need to carry the weight of *prima facie* justification in order to aid in making moral decisions. I will refer to this method as the "binding *prima facie* biblical principium" approach. Later on in this study, I

attempt to isolate a methodology for producing those binding *prima facie* basic

elements in practical decision-making, namely, the moral principles.

First, however, it needs to be shown how the method of arriving at moral

decisions in the journals can be objectionable, even if the moral claims

themselves are agreeable. In this process, the analytical tool of teasing out the

basic approaches (either derived from rational inferences or from biblical

interpretive paradigms) becomes helpful in exposing the methodological basis

for obtaining moral decisions. Keep in mind that according to Fletcher, both

rational and biblical approaches have been used rigidly in the past. He warns

against a legalistic approach to a rational or biblical methodology as a

foundation for ethics:

> Let's look at the Ten Commandments, Ex. 20:2-17 and Deut. 5:6-21,
> for instance. They are very "sacred" in popular Judaism and
> Christianity, and much pious lip service is paid them even in secular
> culture. Protestants regard them as God's positive revealed
> enactments, and Catholics regard them as natural laws discernible
> by reason but backed up by specific revelation via Moses' tablets
> of stone. . .Every religious legalism, whether of the Catholic natural
> law variety or of the Protestant Scriptural law variety, is sooner or
> later repudiated.[20]

Because of the Adventist commitment to appropriate and apply the repository

of biblical wisdom in contemporary life, it is reasonable to expect an approach

to generating moral principles with a binding *prima facie* biblical principium.

How well this is done, however, becomes crucial when trying to determine

whether those who write for the journals avoid the pitfall of legalism.

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[20] Fletcher, 71, 75.

A logical place to start is with the Adventist conception of the role of the moral law in its theology. The concept of the Mosaic Covenant has played an important role in Seventh-day Adventist ethical understandings. This emphasis on covenant is rooted in the commitment Adventists have to observe the Seventh-day Sabbath commandment found in the Mosaic Law. However, the Adventist need for clarifying the relationship between the covenant and its application in ethics is long overdue. This need is acknowledged by one author in Ministry Magazine:

> The issue of biblical covenants is important for many reasons, not the least of which is the foundational and pervasive presence of the covenants throughout the Bible and the fact that struggles to understand this theme have pervaded the history of the Christian church from its earliest years. There still seems to be a significant haze resting on the theological landscape of Adventist covenant theology, and thus upon our personal faith experience in these things.[21]

The "haze" referred to is in part due to the Adventist theologian's desire to isolate the Decalogue from the ceremonial and civil commandments of the Mosaic Covenant. This has been motivated by the Seventh-day Adventist church's desire to base their commitment to a seventh-day Sabbath worship on the moral code of the Ten Commandments. Adventists reason that the Ten Commandments, unlike the ceremonial or civil codes of the Pentateuch, are unchangeable, absolute, and universal. A sampling of articles that argue for a covenantal approach to generating ethical principles reveal a commitment to

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[21] Will Eva, "Covenants: From Shadow to 3-D," Ministry Magazine, Feb. 2004, 4.

view the Mosaic Decalogue as part of an ongoing compilation and convergence of many codes rather than a time conditioned relative expression of the eternal will of God.

Fletcher sees this as the compendium versus distillation view of law ethics.[22] He writes,

> Legalists take it as a compendium, as a collection and conflation of many laws, obedience to all of them being implicit in their coming together as a summary. Situationists, however, take it to mean a distillation, i.e., that the essential spirit and ethos of many laws has been distilled or liberated, extracted, filtered out, with the legal husks, or rubbish, thrown away as dross.[23]

In an editorial article, Will Eva argues that the book of Hebrews sets the paradigm for understanding the continuity between the two covenants. He interprets this paradigm through a compendium model of law ethics. His concluding proposition is that ". . . indeed, the new covenant is simply the old covenant personified. And it is personified by God in human form in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, Who was very God."[24] Eva finds the continuity of the covenants not in the ethic of love, but in the personal embodied living reality of Jesus of Nazareth.

Brian Jones, in his article, "Twin Towers of Tragedy and Triumph," echoes this idea when he writes, "Christ on Calvary represented the twin pillars of heaven's government—law and grace integrated and embodied in one God-

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[22] Fletcher, 70.
[23] Fletcher, 70-71.
[24] Eva, 37.

man. . . . All this smiting force was brought against the twin towers of law and grace personified in that innocent sacrifice."[25]

James Cone rightly warns against taking the first-century life of Jesus as an infallible moral guideline to be reenacted by the twenty-first century disciple when he says,

> The question is not what Jesus did, as if his behavior in the first century is the infallible ethical guide for our actions today. We must ask not what he did but what he is doing, and what he did becomes important only insofar as it points to his activity today. To use the Jesus of history as an absolute ethical guide for people today is to become enslaved to the past, foreclosing God's eschatological future and its judgment on the present. It removes the element of risk in ethical decisions and makes people slaves to principles.[26]

Although Cone's warning is *apropos*, his reference to making "people slaves to principles" fails to recognize how the use of binding *prima facie* principles is not necessarily enslaving but is in fact enabling, so long as it is divorced from a legalistic application. Nevertheless, when one abstracts the first-century life of Jesus from its contextual setting, to become the universal personal embodiment of law ethic—a kind of collective example of perfect covenant—there will emerge a bewildering account of the Gospel story. It leaves the readers with an uncertainty about the strength-generating faith story and the relevance of the dynamic principles for moral guidance that can be appropriated today. Dietrich Bonhoeffer is able to rightly grasp that distinction:

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[25] Brian D. Jones, "Twin Towers of Tragedy and Triumph," *Message Magazine*, Jan./Feb. 2002, 28.

[26] James Cone, Risks of Faith: The Emergence of a Black Theology of Liberation, 1968-1998 (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999), 36.

> Simply stating the sinlessness of Jesus fails if it is based upon the observable acts of Jesus. His acts take place in the homoioma sarkos. They are not sinless, but ambiguous. . .The assertion of the sinlessness of Jesus in his deeds is not an evident moral judgment, but an assertion of faith.[27]

Eva's article suggests a legalistic mode by closely applying the metaphor of covenant to the person of Jesus particularly when he says, "Jesus obviously did not remove the Moral Law in any way, but instead resoundingly confirmed it. When it came to the Mosaic Code, He was the fulfillment of all."[28]

Eva is not alone in his desire to apply the compendium theory to the Mosaic and Creation covenants. An article by Tim Crosby argues for a compendium model when he interprets the story of the Jerusalem Council of Acts, Chapter 15 as an attempt to salvage the moral law.[29] Another article by Roy Gane attempts to develop a criterion for applying a biblical law to a contemporary moral issue. Like Eva and Crosby, Gane's principle is backed by the compendium theory. He views the divine covenants as monolithic, "None of these covenants replaces the one before it; instead, each supplements what has come before."[30]

In still another article, Smuts van Rooyen argues for a paradigm of covenantal change that is evolutionary versus revolutionary. According to van Rooyen, both the kingdom motif and covenantal motif are gradual in scripture.

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[27] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Christ the Center, tr. Edwin H. Robertson (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978), 109.

[28] Eva, 37.

[29] Tim Crosby, "The Apostolic Council and the Ten Commandments (Part 2)," Ministry Magazine, April 2005, 14-15.

[30] Roy Gane, "Justly Integrating Covenant, Law, and Sabbath," Ministry Magazine, Feb. 2004, 6.

He writes, "The Scriptures teach the kingdom unfolds developmentally, first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel (Mark 4:24-29), and the covenant and law keep pace."[31] Despite his good beginning, van Rooyen's article takes a confusing turn. Although he acknowledges that at each stage of development, there are things lost and new things that emerge, nevertheless his analysis goes off track when it comes to challenging law ethics in light of the new covenant.

Van Rooyen correctly recognizes that at any stage the work of development can be frustrated by attempts "to freeze the kingdom within the framework"[32] of previous covenantal modes; nevertheless, he appears to be frustrating his own attempts at clarifying the relationship between law ethics in the new covenantal era of the Spirit. He writes that the Ten Commandments still have moral authority and conflates the distillation/compendium distinction when he says, "This summary does not abolish the commandments, simply because a summary never destroys what it summarizes. It distills but does not destroy."[33] My concern is that van Rooyen does not acknowledge that anything is lost in the Ten Commandments (like the condoning of the institution of slavery in the fourth commandment). Nor does he recognize the possibility that the new emergence is the distillation of the law of love and therefore a replacement of the old code.

It is my suggestion that a deep commitment to law ethics avoids wrestling with ethical issues at the level where it matters the most, i.e., conscience. For

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[31] Smuts van Rooyen, "The Covenants: A Developmental Approach," Ministry Magazine, Feb. 2004, 13.
[32] van Rooyen, 14.
[33] van Rooyen, 16.

most people, all things being equal, laws address the obvious course of action.

Where they look for ethical guidance is in those areas that Fletcher elegantly

terms the penumbra:

> We are in "the ethical penumbra"—where things are not too
> certain. In between the brightly lighted side of a satellite, where
> the sun's light reaches, and the dark side turned away (the umbra),
> lies the shadowed, partly lighted area in between, the penumbra.
> So many decisions in life are of this kind; they fall in between. This
> "penumbric" concern of situation ethics is parallel to Bonhoeffer's
> penultimate concern with history and the world.[34]

An examination of these articles leads to the conclusion that the binding *prima*

facie biblical principium methodology is reduced to an attempt to sufficiently

apply the millennium's old Mosaic code of 10 words, the Decalogue, to any

contemporary moral issues.

This sampling is sufficient to provide the basic rubric to evaluate the kind

of method employed in the two journals that allows one to develop moral

principles. This evidence of how the better articles in these journals analyze

moral problems demonstrates a methodology that struggles with the legalism

Adventism has historically fought to avoid. What appear to be the binding *prima*

facie biblical moral principles are the Ten Commandments of the Mosaic

Decalogue. Here we find a biblical legalism approach to ethics. This approach

demonstrates the need for the emergence of binding *prima facie* biblical moral

principles that can be applied more agilely to contemporary moral problems.

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[34] Fletcher, 135.

Rendering Social Engagement Feeble: An Unsuitable Adventist Model

In this study, we have thus far provided evidence that these Adventist publications (1) do not broadly survey the range of contemporary moral issues, and (2) that the method used for generating binding *prima facie* biblical moral principles is ambivalent at best and legalistic at worse and thus a cause for concern. Now I want to establish, (3) that these journals are apparently wedded to a model of the Christian sacred story that ultimately renders feeble the efforts for engaging matters of social justice.

Darryl M. Trimiew, in his essay entitled, "Moral Evolution: From Customary Societies to Atomistic Individuals," outlines a progression of moral agency from the community to the individual.[35] He writes, "Traditionally, ethics were reflections on set practices instantiated in the customs and mores of particular societies and civilizations."[36] Because the religious notions, ancient myths, and reigning worldviews of a community restricted the notion of ethical agency to that of the group and not the individual, this practice created a self-contained world with a self-referential common or shared meaning.[37] Trimiew suggests the metaphor for this type of morality is the "corral" ethic.[38] This ethical model limits

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[35] Darryl M. Trimiew, "Moral Evolution: From Customary Societies to Atomistic Individuals," in <u>Handbook of U.S. Theologies of Liberation</u>, ed. Miguel A. De La Torre (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2004), 101-09.
[36] Trimiew, 101.
[37] Trimiew, 101.
[38] Trimiew, 102.

one's moral obligation to those within the "corral" and by so doing it also limits moral dilemmas.[39]

However, with the rise of imperialistic societies, "corral" morality had to give way to a more universal ethic. Liberation movements where oppressed people demanded freedom was one strategy for making space for an emerging universal morality. At the same time, there was emerging concurrently a conceptual development in Western societies that demanded more than group freedom: these societies demanded individual liberties as well. Yet these individual liberties were conceived in negative terms: freedom from group agencies that constrained the individual agent. Trimiew argues that a freedom from those basic needs that are necessary conditions for flourishing was not accounted for in the new way of conceiving notions of liberty. For example, one is free to starve to death.[40] Trimiew proposes that we develop a new language or vocabulary for expressing an adequate moral system for today, one that expresses an ethic that meets both individual and group needs, along with the lessons of universal and participatory demands for more liberty. He writes:

> It is only with this coordinated relation of the needs and destinies of all people that the old notions of "corralled membership" can be properly dissolved. What duties I owe to my group, other groups, and myself help to explain and account for the rights I have—rights to exercise as well as rights to recognize and protect. Only with the recognition of this basic and universal connectedness can an ethic that is justifiable to individuals and groups be attempted, let alone realized.[41]

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[39] Trimiew, 103.
[40] Trimiew, 104.
[41] Trimiew, 105-06.

Based upon this analysis, Trimiew sees new and revolutionary moral challenges only being met with "an ethic of participation and solidarity" that considers all people as God's children.[42]

There is a unifying metaphor in the Seventh-day Adventist Church that suggests it is also susceptible to a "corral" morality. The idea of the "remnant" motif in scripture runs deep in the Adventist self-identity.[43] Attending this belief is the idea they are God's 'peculiar people.' In the article, "A Nonpartisan God," Brian Jones argues that the remnant are always a small minority and that "Time, trends, family, or friends do not control their decisions, but Bible truth alone," situating them in a unique place that "demands moral courage and clarity of perception that only God can give."[44] In Jones' view, the fact that the remnant is a minority does not make God partisan because this select group comes from every nation. Jones' article illustrates how the remnant idea is tied to the compendium legalism when he writes,

> God's law is a transcript of His character, a prismatic display of divine love relationally applied. Hating to see anyone exemplify this experience, Satan teaches people to believe that the Ten Commandments were done away at Calvary, and that God's love now takes the place of His law. But the remnant don't buy into this sort of slippery double-talk.[45]

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[42] Trimiew, 108.

[43] Jack W. Provonsha, <u>A Remnant in Crisis</u> (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1993).

[44] Brian Jones, "A Nonpartisan God—Does He Play Favorites?" <u>Message Magazine</u>, Nov./Dec. 2002, 14.

[45] Jones, "Nonpartisan God," 15.

Douglas Morgan, in his book, <u>Adventism and the American Republic,</u>
partly agrees with Robert Fuller's assessment that apocalyptic symbols have
been used in Millerite Adventism as a tool of "tribalistic boundary posturing."[46] In
many ways, this notion is reflected in journal articles that touch on moral issues.
While it is true that certain authors, with regret, acknowledge that the "remnant"
identity operates as a "corral" identity that negatively affects the Adventist
mission, they bemoan the remnant theory in part because it hinders the
evangelistic agenda of the Church and not because it diminishes the Church's
stand on social justice.[47]

One <u>Ministry</u> article was dedicated to exploring the question of how
much, if at all, Seventh-day Adventists should cooperate with other Christians.[48]
In the article, the "corral" identity is taken for granted. Church historian George
Knight writes, "[a]fter all, hasn't the denomination taught that all other churches
are part of the fallen Babylon of Revelation 14:8 and 18:1-4?"[49] Knight's
argument lends support to the notion of a "corral" identity as he points out the
ambivalent history within the church with respect to its teaching and practice.

Another article, written by Walla Walla College Professor of Biblical Studies
Alden Thompson, calls for Adventists to have a more engaging approach to

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[46] Quoted in Douglas Morgan, 209.
[47] Barry D. Oliver, "Serious about Secular Society?: Christian Witness in the
Secularized West," <u>Ministry Magazine</u>, Nov. 2001, 8-9.
[48] George R. Knight, "Another Look at Babylon: Cooperating with Other
Christians?" <u>Ministry Magazine</u>, April 2002, 5-6.
[49] Knight, "Another Look at Babylon: Cooperating with Other Christians?" 5.

other groups. At the same time, he acknowledges a mixed appropriation of the

"corral" identity when he writes,

> A strident (sectarian?) separation seems to have been
> unavoidable at crucial points in the experience of God's
> people . . . As for Adventism, events and circumstances in the
> nineteenth century made the scenario outlined in the book *The
> Great Controversy* quite believable.[50]

Thompson, like Knight, goes on to suggest another approach is embedded

within the Adventist theological heritage.

If the article by Lawrence Downing, senior pastor of the White Memorial

Church, is any indication of an emerging approach, then there is another model

struggling to be heard. In sharing the story of rebuilding the financial health of his

congregation, he points out how maintaining a meaningful and engaging urban

community ministry emerged as a key value.[51]

With the exception of Downing, these examples of challenges to the

"corral" identity within these journals, arguing for and justifying an alternative

model, fail to outline an argument for engaging contemporary problems that

assume the truth of another model. So much energy is put into defining what the

relationship should be between the Seventh-day Adventist and non Seventh-day

Adventist that it is evidence of reluctance toward adopting a bold model for

social engagement.[52] In other words, these journals seem to be struggling with a

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[50] Alden Thompson, "Response to Dale Ratzlaff," Ministry Magazine, Feb. 2004, 32.
[51] Lawrence Downing, "The Challenge and Future of Urban Ministry: The Case of White Memorial Church" Ministry Magazine, Dec. 2005, 10-11.
[52] Angel M. Rodriquez, "Adventism and Ecumenical Conversation," Ministry Magazine, Dec. 2003, 5-6, 8-9.

remnant-corral-ethic model for social engagement that yearns for a deeper

commitment to social values. Once again, Morgan reminds us:

> The apocalyptic reading of history has indeed functioned to draw
> boundaries around and infuse meaning into a separate Adventist
> identity . . . . In sustaining the remnant identity, Adventist have too
> often fallen into the temptation of retreating into a fortress of
> cultural isolation and from there hurling denunciations at outside
> forces.

As we have seen from Trimiew's analysis, this model for a moral theology is

unacceptable,

> In today's global village, a concentration on only the struggle of
> one's particular group is no longer morally acceptable. . . . In short,
> there is only one large corral. The refusal of various liberation
> movements to concern themselves with the fates of others is the
> self-issued death warrants of these moral movements.[53]

The new language that ethics demands is one that goes beyond the "corral"

ethic. In addition, Trimiew argues that the "new ethic must use philosophical

rather than theological" language in order to avoid a new "corral" of the

religious.[54] I suggest that this new way of talking use ordinary language. Moral

theology has a scope that must reach as broadly as human pain goes and it

must have a flexibility that can speak in the language that allows its purposes to

be understood.

Chapter Summary

What can be said for Adventist ethics as expressed in these official

journals that have been surveyed? One observation is that if these journals

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[53] Trimiew, 108.
[54] Trimiew, 106, n. 22.

reflect the heartbeat of official Adventist endeavors to address, incorporate, or define moral theology, then the articles evidence a crisis of conscience. These journals demonstrate ambivalence, uncertainty, hesitancy, and two-mindedness when it comes to an Adventist methodology of deriving binding *prima facie* moral principles. They also show limited concern and a truncated discourse on the matters of moral issues that are relevant for our times.

The dominant voices show that moral concerns are reduced to topics that are mostly within the arena of immediate personal control and that moral centeredness is closely wedded to conformity to the Ten Commandment legal code. Furthermore, the authors operate from a tentative model of social engagement that embraces a "corral" mentality and renders social justice concerns anemic.

In the light of these challenges, the temptation is to approach moral theology from a purely rational standpoint. One might conclude that moral issues can be resolved by an ethic that is common to every human and therefore does not need the husk of religious narratives, myth, and jargon. The following chapter attempts to explore why this is not a viable option for persons who have a deep commitment to appropriate the biblical narratives as empowering traditions that motivate right conduct. The rational approach does not solve this dilemma, as we will now see.

CHAPTER 3

Why Immanuel Kant's Rational Approach to Moral Theology
Is Not a Viable Alternative for Adventist Theological Ethics

Why It Can Be Said That Kant Has a Moral Religion

Many people view the moral religion of Immanuel Kant as the best way to avoid or circumvent the problems of a moral theology that is wedded too closely to Sacred Scripture and its pre scientific worldview. This chapter intends to show why such an approach is problematic—why it's not a desirable platform upon which to build a moral theology. Kant's approach to morality does not take seriously the demands of both morality and faith. Kant's divorce of moral theology from the scriptural sources that embody the deepest values of the religious form of life results in a failure to see the deep connection of teleology in moral practice. The teleological trajectory toward the consummation of the Kingdom of God is a motivating force in the moral life of the believer, along with the concept of grace as a promise of forgiveness and fulfillment.[1]

In the first part of this chapter, I will survey three works of Kant: (1) _Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals_, (2) _Critique of Practical Reason_, and (3) _Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone_, for an elucidation of the notion that Kant has a moral religion. These works provide a fair sampling of the three questions that Kant seeks to answer: (1) What can we know? (2) What must we do? (3) What can we hope for?

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[1] Paul Tillich, _Morality and Beyond_ (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 63.

In the second part of this chapter, I will examine whether moral imperatives have to be either hypothetical or categorical. I want to show how Kant's divorce of theological ethics from the Christian sacred writings has rendered a false disjuncture in his view of the necessary conditions for moral imperatives. It is understood that the consequences that result from this recognition give hope for the possibility of a different approach to moral theology for postmodern humanity.

In light of his moral principle of duty and in response to his recognition and conclusion that we cannot do our duty, Kant's religion arises out of the rational implications of our moral deficiency. It is apparent that Kant's moral analysis provides the impetus for his religious postulates and that Kant's religion provides the reasonably necessary and sufficient conditions for hope despite our moral deficiencies. It is this writer's contention, however, that his approach is riddled with problems for one who seeks to construct an adequate moral theology. Kant's connection between morality and religion is well illustrated in his classic statement:

> I find that the moral principle admits as possible only the conception of an Author of the world possessed of the highest perfection. He must be omniscient, in order to know my conduct up to the inmost root of my mental state in all possible cases and into all future time; omnipotent, in order to allot to it its fitting consequences; similarly He must be omnipresent, eternal, &c. Thus the moral law, by means of the conception of the summum bonum as the object of a pure practical reason, determines the concept of the First Being as the Supreme Being.[2]

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[2] Immanuel Kant, <u>Critique of Practical Reason</u>, trans. Thomas Kingsmill Abbott (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2004), 150.

The connection made here is one in which the concept of God is determined by the moral concept of the greatest good.

Moral Theology: *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*

In his preface to the Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals, Kant prepares his readers for a unique philosophical approach. It is his purpose to orient the reader to his way of conceiving the tasks of the discipline of philosophy in general. He separates logic (what he calls formal philosophy) from his so-called material philosophy: physics and ethics. According to Kant, physics attempts to understand the laws of nature while ethics attempts to understand the laws of freedom. Unlike logic, ethics and physics share an empirical side as well as a rational side.

The doctrine of morals represents the rational part of ethics while practical anthropology corresponds to the empirical part. Here we see a potential problem for Kant because so much of practical life is empirical; child development is but one example. Kant recognizes that basing ethics on the contingencies of empirical matters would yield antinomian tendencies. Kant held that the rational part of these disciplines take priority over the empirical tasks. He states early in the preface that the fundamental first principle for a metaphysic of morals requires that a valid moral law have the criteria of absolute necessity as the ground of obligation. This ground must be *a priori*, and not based on empirical contingencies. This standard of absolute necessity and

logical validity (providing the foundation for morality) hints at Kant's sensibility of

ultimate matters and his attention to philosophical precision. He writes:

> Thus a metaphysics of morals is indispensably necessary not merely
> from a motive of speculation, in order to investigate the source of
> the practical principles lying a priori in our reason, but also because
> morals themselves remain subject to all sorts of corruption as long
> as that guiding thread and supreme norm of their correct
> judgment is lacking.[3]

The search for a priori principles suggests an interest in morality that goes beyond

the contingencies of factual matters. Morality, from Kant's perspective, rests on

necessary foundations, according to Kant. Morality is more than coercive

conformity to the law. It requires us to conform for the sake of the moral law.

Not only does he express this idea in the Groundwork, he repeats it in Critique of

Practical Reason. He points out the need for human actions to materialize from

a pure will.[4] He goes on to let us know that his work searches for the supreme

principle of morality.[5]

　　As we have seen from the quote mentioned earlier, the supreme principle

determines the Supreme Being. Although he speaks of a uniting or harmony of

the divine will with this supreme principle of morality[6], nevertheless, it appears

that even the divine is recognized as such only because God conforms also to

the moral law:

> The essence of things does not alter through their external relations,
> and it is in accordance with that which alone constitutes the

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[3] Immanuel Kant, Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals, ed. and trans. Allen
W. Wood (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 5-6.
[4] Kant, Critique of Practical Reason, 128-30.
[5] Kant, Critique of Practical Reason, 2-3.
[6] Kant, Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals, 30.

absolute worth of the human being, without thinking about such relations, that he must be judged by whoever it may be, even by the highest being. Morality is thus the relation of actions to the autonomy of the will, that is, to the possible universal legislation through it maxims.[7]

This moral law finds its atomic loci in the autonomous human will. As such, "The will whose maxims necessarily harmonize with the laws of autonomy is a holy, absolutely good will."[8]

This background is important for any investigation into why it can be said that Kant has a moral religion. This framework informs us of the way in which Kant predicates in divine nature the rational foundations, which also ground the faculty of human morality. While Kant argues that the basis of morality must be reason and not prudence, one wonders whether Kant's religious postulates get in the way of his attempt to complete this argument. The moral gap in human nature can only be overcome by a grace from the Holy Will, a divine grace.

Morality and Religion in the Critique of Practical Reason

It is important to take notice of the method Kant employs in order to arrive at the religious postulates in his Critique of Practical Reason. He applies the same dialectical approach that developed his distinction between the noumenal world and the phenomenal world.[9] His doctrine of the two worlds distinguishes the world of appearances, i.e., the phenomenal world, from the world-in-itself, i.e., the noumenal world. For Kant, the world of appearances is

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[7] Kant, Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals, 57.
[8] Kant, Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals, 57.
[9] Kant, Critique of Practical Reason, 16 and 55-59.

inseparable from the world of the senses.[10] While the sensory realm is run by the determined laws of causation, the will, which also belongs to the phenomenal realm, is governed by the law of freedom.

Practical reason belongs to the world of morality. It is in this world that freedom must be presupposed in the same way that intuition is presupposed in the sensory world.[11] These implications for morality are the same as those that lead to religion; that is, religion must also be presupposed.

We only experience the will as free in moral endeavor.[12] So then, the only way to conceive of moral endeavor is to employ a concept of freedom that governs the will while the laws of causation determine every thing else in the phenomenal realm:

> The concept of a pure will arises out of the former, as that of a pure understanding arises out of the latter . . . it is practical reason which, with this concept, first proposes to speculative reason the most insoluble problem, thereby placing it in the greatest perplexity, is evident from the following consideration: Since nothing in phenomena can be explained by the concept of freedom, but the mechanism of nature must constitute the only clue; moreover, when pure reason tries to ascend in the series of causes to the unconditioned, it falls into an antinomy which is entangled in incomprehensibilities on the one side as much as the other.[13]

For Kant, the sensory experience is conceivable because intuition frames and conditions the understanding, while moral experience is conceivable because

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[10] Kant, Critique of Practical Reason, 4-5 and 16.
[11] Kant, Critique of Practical Reason, 56.
[12] Kant, Critique of Practical Reason, 43.
[13] Kant, Critique of Practical Reason, 30.

freedom frames and conditions the will. Yet when this is freedom makes the will ungovernable, then it yields a kind of moral antinomianism.

In trying to provide an explanation for the noumenal world, one runs into a major problem: the world-in-itself is where our knowledge reaches its limits. We cannot know with certainty the nature of things-in-themselves by speculative reason. Nevertheless, the requirements of practical reason make our belief in their reality an imperative.[14] Speculative reason abstracts from sensible experience to the possibilities for knowledge and by doing so, it recognizes the limits to what can be known. From this dialectic, we are able to recognize that speculative reason is (1) sensical/empirical, (2) tautological/rational and (3) limiting.[15]

At the limits of our knowledge, we find that further inquiry for knowledge can only be viewed as an obsession of speculative reason. Nevertheless, at this very limit we find for practical reason that belief is necessitated. Our obsession to know, rather than move on in faith, is generated by the forms of sensibility that are embedded in the nature of our physical existence. Accompanying these forms of sensibility are the categories of understanding.[16] The categories of understanding frame our interpretive faculties such that we are able to have an experience.

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[14] Kant, <u>Critique of Practical Reason</u>, 100.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Kant, <u>Critique of Practical Reason</u>, 54-59.

We learn from Kant that the notion of the two worlds has strong implications for practical reason. Practical reason provides a category for the will, which is different from those categories of understanding in the dialectic. In the context of speculative reason, that which is an abstract possibility of the intuition becomes a real hope of freedom for practical reason.

In pure speculative reason, while it is the case that we cannot know the world-in-itself, still the categories of understanding make it possible to know the world of appearances. In like manner, even though in pure practical reason we cannot know the reality of the religious postulates, yet the moral categorical imperative makes it possible to rationally hope for supernatural aid for our moral deficiency.[17]

Therefore, for Kant, if you want to know the kind of reality that religion has, the answer is found in morality. It is a category mistake to erroneously apply the concepts of religion from the notions of speculative reason instead of from those of morality. Speculative reason's approach to religion yields metaphysical assertions and thus is a category mistake. God cannot be arrived at through physics or metaphysics. God is not like a place out there, only somewhere further. In order to clarify the concept of religion, Kant believes religious doctrines must derive from the practical category of morality. His religious postulates must be presupposed in order to complete the moral argument. In other words, without the religious postulates, there is no motivation to live a moral

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[17] Kant, Critique of Practical Reason, 95.

life. Furthermore, in the same way that we must presuppose the autonomy of the will, for Kant, we also must presuppose the immortality of the soul, the existence of God and life after death. For him, moral endeavor is an empty notion without the postulates of religion:

> Nevertheless, in the practical problem of pure reason, i.e., the necessary pursuit of the summum bonum, such a connexion is postulated as necessary: we ought to endeavour to promote the summum bonum, which, therefore, must be possible. Accordingly, the existence of a cause of all nature, distinct from nature itself, and containing the principle of this connexion, namely, of the exact harmony of happiness with morality, is also postulated.[18]

Not only can we see at this point that the principle of morality determines how we conceptualize the Supreme Being, but also that without the religious postulates our moral endeavor is foundationless.

Scholars disagree on the question, in what sense does Kant limit our knowledge in order to make room for faith? The first sense, into which some Kantian scholars read his attempt to limit our knowledge in order to make room for faith, is the sense that our knowledge is confined to the phenomenal realm while religion belongs to the noumenal realm. Faith falls outside the reach of our knowledge. The postulates are postulates of faith.

The other sense into which some Kantian scholars read his attempt to limit our knowledge in order to make room for faith is the sense that he limits the category or draws conceptual limits. Our religious knowledge belongs to the

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[18] Kant, <u>Critique of Practical Reason</u>, 133.

category of morality and not the phenomenal/empirical category. In this way, religion is limited conceptually; namely, to the concept of morality.

D. Z. Phillips argues for a third view. While Phillips does not reduce religion to morality, he suggests that there is a tension between the nature of the postulates and this second reading.[19] According to Phillips, the postulates look like the first reading, yet religion does not fall under the first category. In addition, while Phillips does not accept as a reality the notion of life after death, he nevertheless recognizes that the postulates appear to contain factual content. For Kant, the postulates are objects of hope:

> Considered in respect of this alone, as a principle of explanation, it may be called a hypothesis, but in reference to the intelligibility of an object given us by the moral law (the summum bonum), and consequently of a requirement for practical purposes, it may be called faith, that is to say a pure rational faith, since pure reason (both in its theoretical and its practical use) is the sole source from which it springs.[20]

Here again, we see that the category of morality is where religion belongs. This account raises many questions: to what extent does Kant's rational faith do justice to religious concepts? Are the religious postulates simply an attempt to speak religiously about morality? Are they a transcendental explanation of this world? These questions, and more like them, add to a complete elaboration of the relationship between morality and religion in Kant's philosophy.

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[19] D. Z. Phillips, class notes of a lecture in "Kant on Ethics and Religion" (TH447), Claremont Graduate University, Claremont, CA, Spring 2006.
[20] Kant, Critique of Practical Reason, 135.

Theological Ethics in *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*

In Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone, Kant sketches for his reader a

rational religion. Kant's rational religion eliminates superstition, fanaticism,

illumination, and thaumaturgy: namely, a "supernatural means of grace."[21] Here

again, he arrives at this understanding of religion by beginning with human

nature. He begins by challenging as a false disjunction two views of human

nature. He denies that human nature is either wholly good or wholly evil.

Humanity combines the different parts of animality (mechanical) and personality

(moral).[22]

According to Kant, what is meant by the statement that humankind is evil

by nature is not a general theory but a disposition towards evil actions found

within our natural ways of behaving. For Kant, a religion that seeks supernatural

aid in eradicating human evil without first mandating a change in the human

disposition is cheap and worthless:

> Granted that some supernatural cooperation may be necessary to
> his becoming good, or to his becoming better, yet, whether this
> cooperation consists merely in the abatement of hindrances or
> indeed in positive assistance, man must first make himself worthy to
> receive it, and must lay hold of this aid (which is no small matter)-
> that is, he must adopt this positive increase of power into his maxim,
> for only thus can good be imputed to him and he be known as a
> good man.[23]

The idea of imputation already hints to the religion Kant views as having the

potential of meeting the universal demands of his rational religion.

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[21] Immanuel Kant, Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone, trans. Theodore Green and Hoyt Hudson (New York: Harper, 1960), 48.
[22] Kant, Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone, 21-39.
[23] Kant, Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone, 40.

His historical location in Christian Europe no doubt conditions his first steps in reflecting on a rational religion. However, it is because the Christian religion yields these questions for Kant that its value as a potential universal religion is already somewhat proven. Yet Kant strongly opposes the way clerical Christian religion views its value. Kant's Christianity provides no cheap grace. It is the basis for a rational universal religion primarily because Jesus is the Archetype of moral humanity:

> Now if it were indeed a fact that such a truly godly-minded man at some particular time had descended, as it were, from heaven to earth and had given men in his own person, through his teachings, his conduct, and his sufferings, as perfect an example of a man well-pleasing to God as one can expect to find in external experience (for be it remembered that the archetype of such a person is to be sought nowhere but in our own reason), and if he had, through all this, produced immeasurably great moral good upon earth by effecting a revolution in the human race-even then we should have no cause for supposing him other than a man naturally begotten.[24]

Kant's Christianity does not carry the orthodox doctrines of the incarnation because they serve no moral purpose:

> Its meaning is this: that there exists absolutely no salvation for man apart from the sincerest adoption of genuinely moral principles into his disposition; that what works against this adoption is not so much the sensuous nature, which so often receives the blame, as it is a certain self-incurred perversity, or however else one may care to designate this wickedness which the human race has brought upon itself.[25]

For Kant, orthodox doctrines, which allow Jesus to accomplish the work of salvation for you, or to be your substitute in moral performance and for a merited

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[24] Kant, <u>Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone</u>, 57.
[25] Kant, <u>Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone</u>, 78.

punishment, is a perversion of the teaching of Jesus himself and a religion that is based upon a falsity. Although Kant has a rational place for grace being justly applied to our moral deficiency, it is only after we have a change in our disposition that the human archetype's moral surplus can and will be dispensed.

An argument can be made that Kant's religion begins and ends with humanity. His vision sets out to take us to the *summum bonum* and the Supreme Being, yet it seems to land us right back where we took off—in the autonomous will of humanity. Kant's moral religion is summarized thusly:

> Each individual can know of himself, through his own reason, the will of God which lies at the basis of his religion; for the concept of the Deity really arises solely from consciousness of these laws and from the need of reason to postulate a might which can procure for these laws, as their final end, all the results conformable to them and possible in a world. The concept of a divine will, determined according to pure moral laws alone, allows us to think of only one religion which is purely moral, as it did of only one God.[26]

Is it enough to posit such notions? Kant's purposes, it might be argued, are not an obsession of the speculative reason but an obsession of the practical will. Perhaps there is, after all, no content to this religious vision whatsoever.

For many this is a frightening conclusion. Some people will be driven to atheism. Others may turn back to the irrational superstitious religions, valuing an obsession not of reason but of prudential aims.

Must Moral Imperatives Be Either Hypothetical or Categorical?

In linking our moral behavior to justifiable reason, Kant is credited in moral philosophy/theology with the development of an apparent disjunction. This

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[26] Kant, Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone, 95.

disjunction hinges on whether or not our moral imperatives are by their very nature hypothetical or categorical. At this point, the task of moral theology/philosophy is to distinguish between the conditional and unconditional 'ought.' When this distinction becomes a disagreement in principle, i.e., on whether or not moral commands are hypothetical or categorical in nature, then it is important to stop and analyze the reasoning that sets up this kind of logical disjunction.

An analysis shows how an ethical discourse of this nature poses a false disjuncture. There is no necessary reason why one must pause at this metaphorical fork in the road. One need not decide between the alternatives of hypothetical versus categorical moral commands before going on to present an adequate account of moral behavior. How helpful is this divide between the unconditional, non-hypothetical, absolutely driven 'ought' and the purposive, prudential and practically driven sense of 'ought'? Do we halt all further inquiry into moral theology/philosophy or can we proceed to give an adequate account of moral theology without having to make a final decision on the conditional or unconditional nature of ethical imperatives? Furthermore, does the concept of grace as forgiveness and fulfillment preclude a radical distinction between the hypothetical-teleological goals of the good life and the categorical-deontological obligations of morality?

By analyzing articles written by Philippa Foot and D. Z. Phillips and by highlighting Thomas Wall's method of handling ethical dilemmas, one finds a principle from Ludwig Wittgenstein's philosophy that recommends a useful

analogy between moral training and the process of religious formation. These steps will show progressively how ethical discourse that pauses at this either/or junction results in an unnecessary and false disjuncture. Furthermore, this kind of approach truncates the rich semantic range of the varied senses we find in the words 'should' and 'ought.' Additionally, this approach does not do justice to the boundaries or edges of language that the ethical linguistic form of life runs up against.

Philippa Foot on Hypothetical Imperatives

In her essay entitled "Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives," Philippa Foot argues against Kant's thesis that moral imperatives are categorical imperatives. She quotes from his Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals the following passages:

> Now all imperatives command either hypothetically or categorically. The former represent the practical necessity of a possible action as a means to attain something else which one wills (or which it is possible that one might will). The categorical imperative would be that one which represented an action as objectively necessary for itself, without any reference to another end.[27]

> Now if the action were good merely as a means to something else, then the imperative is hypothetical; if it is represented as good in itself, hence necessary, as the principle of the will, in a will that in itself accords with reason, then it is categorical.[28]

Foot is correct in her assertion that Kant's hypothetical imperative is heterogeneous primarily because it is desire-dependent. Whenever inclination is

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[27] Kant, Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals, 31.
[28] Ibid.

mixed with reasoning in order to discover the moral 'must,' the moral philosopher

will find it confusing to distinguish the necessary 'ought' from the prudential

'ought.' After she demonstrates the diverse nature of hypothetical imperatives,

she writes:

> Is Kant right to say that moral judgments are categorical, not
> hypothetical, imperatives? It may seem that he is, for we find in our
> language two different uses of words such as 'should' and 'ought',
> apparently corresponding to Kant's hypothetical and categorical
> imperatives, and we find moral judgements on the 'categorical'
> side. ...When we say that a man should do something and intend a
> moral judgement we do not have to back up what we say by
> considerations about his interests or his desires; if no such connexion
> can be found the 'should' need not be withdrawn.[29]

While a cursory read of this quote might initially suggest that Foot supports Kant's

moral philosophy, in fact she does not. Foot argues that we have reason to

doubt the truth of Kant's categorical standard by virtue of the fact that 'rules of

etiquette' and 'a club rule' have the same force as Kant's moral imperative.[30]

Neither with 'a club rule' nor with a 'rule of etiquette' does one need to

withdraw the 'should' in the absence of considerations about a person's interests

or desires. For her, the burden is on the Kantian moral philosopher to distinguish

the logical necessity involved in describing moral categorical imperatives from

'rules of etiquette' or 'club rules.'

It is significant that Foot believes that one can account for the difference

of a moral categorical imperative from categorical imperatives in 'rules of

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[29] Philippa Foot, "Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives," in <u>Virtues and Vices and Other Essays in Moral Philosophy</u> (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 159.

[30] Foot, 161.

etiquette' simply by referring to the strong feelings associated with the "relative stringency of our moral teaching."[31] This conclusion is unacceptable for a Kantian moral philosophy. Yet, more importantly, it seems to be unacceptable for establishing the criteria that Foot herself would like to argue for; namely, a system of hypothetical imperatives. It is difficult to see how Foot can defend why she views morality as a system of hypothetical imperatives when she has already tied morality so closely to the irrational. She writes:

> Irrational actions are those in which a man in some way defeats his own purposes, doing what is calculated to be disadvantageous or to frustrate his ends. Immorality does not necessarily involve any such thing.[32]

It appears from the logic implicit in the above statement that Foot has a concept of morality that is not based on rationality, since, after all, "immorality does not necessarily involve any such thing." Given the role that rationality has in her account of moral imperatives, the burden is upon Foot to show a sufficient reason why the non-inconsistent actions of a villainous man would fail to be considered an equally reasonable alternative practice of morality to her set of calculated means and ends. This move, suggesting a non-cognitive difference based solely in the emotions, gives us no compelling reason to accept her account of morality as a system of hypothetical imperatives.

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[31] Foot, 162.
[32] Foot, 162.

D. Z. Phillips on the Moral 'Must'

Professor D. Z. Phillips, while not a Kantian moral philosopher, also finds Philippa Foot's line of reasoning unacceptable for different reasons. On the one hand, he, like Foot, challenges Kant's merely formal character of accounting for the moral 'ought.' He contends:

> It is the content of moral considerations which makes it possible to say the kind of thing that Kant and others have wanted to say about their form. . .Philosophers who want to speak of the inescapability of moral considerations, a way of talking which puzzles Foot, need not fall into Kant's confusions in this respect . . . Were it not for the fact that friendships do develop among human beings it would make no sense to speak of the inescapable demands of friendship.[33]

Here, Phillips locates the origins of the categorical imperatives formal nature within a form of moral behavior lived out in a particular context. He agrees in part with Foot regarding the inadequacy of Kant's moral philosophy: first, because the form of the moral 'ought' in Kant seems to fail to recognize how it is derived from a form of life; second, because of the realization that there are other motives for behaving morally other than duty; and third, because both Foot and Phillips recognize two senses of the words 'should' and 'ought.'

Phillips deviates from Foot when he denies the example that 'rules of etiquette' and 'club rules' make the objection that she would like them to make to categorical moral imperatives. He writes:

> Foot thinks that there is just as much reason to call the use of 'should' connected with etiquette categorical as there is to call

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[33] D. Z. Phillips, "In Search of the Moral 'Must': Mrs. Foot's Fugitive Thought" in Intervention in Ethics (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1992), 128.

the use of 'should' connected with moral matters categorical. Considerations of etiquette are as 'inescapable' as moral considerations. Foot is wrong about this.[34]

Phillips argues that the acceptance of a condition for 'club rules' can be revoked in a way that moral rules cannot. He gives as an example the fact that it would make sense to resign from the club if one does not like the club rules, but he questions whether it can make any sense at all to resign from a moral consideration.[35] Furthermore, he believes that more can be said for 'rules of etiquette' than Foot is willing to grant 'rules of etiquette.' He points out the difference between a person who cares about etiquette for etiquette's sake and one who cares only for the praise that one receives from fellows.[36]

Phillips recognizes the difference in a moral categorical consideration from other categorical considerations in the additional principle of discrimination that one affords to the moral issues. As an illustration, he offers the case where a person overrides the consideration of etiquette for the moral consideration of not hurting the feelings of another person who might be ignorant of a procedure of mannerism.[37] To this point, Phillips argues cogently and with force. He demonstrates the place where moral considerations might overrule considerations of etiquette. Yet, it is at this very point where the real question raises its proverbial head; namely, whether or not those ethical considerations are hypothetical or categorical in nature.

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[34] Phillips, "In Search of the Moral 'Must'," 133.
[35] Phillips, "In Search of the Moral 'Must'," 135.
[36] Phillips, "In Search of the Moral 'Must'," 135-36.
[37] Phillips, "In Search of the Moral 'Must'," 137.

Phillips concludes that moral considerations are not another interest to be weighed against other interests, but are the values to be applied in the pursuit of any interest. These values speak to absolute measures.[38] Phillips fails to tell us what guides the moral imperative when we need to weigh the values (the absolute measures) we hold at those times we find ourselves in a moral dilemma.

Thomas Wall on Critical Thinking and Moral Problems

The problem with a disjunctive discourse that aims to decide between whether moral imperatives are hypothetical versus categorical in nature is seen clearly when one reaches the level of moral dilemmas. It is at this level that the ethical principles we use to evaluate or measure moral action find themselves in need of a system of hypothetical imperatives to inform right action. Debates that treat moral commands as either hypothetical or categorical fail to clarify the issues experienced in the ethical considerations of a moral dilemma.

As described in Chapter 2, Thomas Wall provides his readers with a guide for dealing with moral problems that reach the stage of a dilemma. In fact, the real task of deciding the moral 'ought' shows its problematic nature in those cases where reasoning is not on the level of habitual, factual, or conflict of rules but on the level where there is a conflict of principles.[39] Furthermore, the real task cannot be truncated to the binary of hypothetical/categorical imperatives.

Wall's optimism regarding a person's ability to provide an ethical theory and practice morality within it is open to criticism. Nevertheless, he does a good

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[38] Phillips, "In Search of the Moral 'Must'," 145-46.
[39] Wall, 60-66.

job in showing how the various ethical theories yield principles that inform our moral choices. The consequentialist ethical theories like utilitarianism yield the principle of beneficence. This is defined as doing good. The non-consequentialist ethical theories like Kant's categorical imperative yield the principle of justice, namely, respecting individual rights. Finally, the ethical theory of virtue yields the principle of autonomy: freedom. According to Professor Wall, the nature of right action is guided by these principles, abstracted from ethical theories by reason.[40]

At this point, one could argue that a person discovers their values only when faced with ethical dilemmas of the sort where one's moral principles are in conflict with each other. Where moral principles are in conflict, the categorical imperative *conflates* with the hypothetical imperative to inform the moral decision.

Wall's approach demonstrates unwittingly the human process of forming moral beliefs. At the earliest stages of moral development, the moral beliefs we form are beliefs about beneficence: doing good and avoiding evil. Like Wall's approach, Alan Dershowitz illustrates the preconditions for the early stages of moral development. He argues that only mortal beings can make choices regarding good and evil. He writes:

> At a more fundamental level, it can be argued that it is the knowledge of mortality itself that is essential to understanding, in any real sense, the difference between good and evil. An immortal being, knowing that he or she will never die, does not

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[40] Wall, 56-60.

have to make difficult choices. Everything can be made right over time. It is the knowledge of mortality—the realization that life could end at any moment-that requires constant choices. . . . In the absence of death, moral choices may be postponed forever.[41]

Here, Dershowitz elucidates the pre-conceptual levels in the moral probing of human behavior. From a human point of view, moral agency is predicated on our behavior to survive harms that would cost our mortality. This means the very first moral principle we come to value is the principle of beneficence: doing good and avoiding evil.

Yet we find in this embedded another principle, which emerges and transcends the rudimentary morality of good and evil. This other principle abstracts another good: a moral good called justice, which helps adjudicate between types of good. This way of viewing the semantic range of the moral 'must' shows how a conflation of the categorical 'ought' and hypothetical 'ought' renders a denial of the disjunction between the two as an adequate expression of the moral imperative. Moral imperatives appear to manifest themselves beyond the categorical/hypothetical distinction.

Wittgenstein: An Analogy of Moral and Religious Formation

The development of moral consciousness leads one to become suspicious that the moral 'ought' forever transcends us. This transcending quality is part of the mysterious nature of the moral imperative. It is analogous to the family resemblance metaphor that eludes clear and definable criteria. The terms and

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[41] Alan M. Dershowitz, The Genesis of Justice: Ten Stories of Biblical Injustice that Led to the Ten Commandments and Modern Law (New York: Warner Books, 2000), 39.

phrases utilized so far: 'embedded,' 'family resemblance,' and 'form of life'
express a Wittgensteinian sensibility.

It appears that one can find in the discipline of ethics an analogy to
Wittgenstein's understanding of a religious form of life. When explaining the
reasons of religious belief, Wittgenstein did not claim that faith has no need of
reasons at all, but rather that the reasons for religious belief are "swallowed
down" in the training of a religious form of life.[42] In a similar manner, it could be
argued that reasons in ethical matters are swallowed down in the training of a
moral form of life. D. Z. Phillips suggests in another writing a clue into the possible
connection between religious and moral training and the role this training
process might play in hiding the most basic justifications for both of them.

Phillips says that giving a person a language is to give them 'a logic' and
to give them a story about God is to give them a theology.[43] Once again, this
sensitivity to the role formation plays in the important practices of humanity is
crucial. It can be argued that to give a person a story with a moral point of view
is to give that person a moral philosophy. Moreover, when that story includes a
story with divine agency, you provide the framework for a moral theology. This is
where Kant's divorce of ethics and moral philosophy drawn from the biblical
narratives leads him to posit an anthropomorphized rational deity. Why is this
deity not simply a myth of the enlightenment? The sacred stories of the ancients

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[42] Ludwig Wittgenstein, On Certainty (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1969), 143.
[43] D. Z. Phillips, "Philosophy, Theology and the Reality of God," in Philosophy of Religion, comp. William L. Rowe and William Wainwright, 3rd ed. (Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1998), 298.

found in the Bible have their problems, yet they are deemed to be sufficient vehicles that offer strength and hope-generating platforms that motivate an adequate moral life as witnessed by the reform movements that are found throughout Christian history.

The need for suggesting Wittgenstein's analogies to help understand the nature of moral imperatives is that they provide a better account of moral imperatives called for beyond the binary of the hypothetical/categorical disjunct. From the ultimate perspective, the notion of a categorical imperative would conceivably be predicated on postulates that inform our moral hopes and dreams. These postulates are necessary in order to make sense of why we would be moral at all. They frame what Schubert Ogden calls the 'limiting question.'[44]

From the pre-conceptive perspective, the notion of a categorical imperative is more akin to the impulse to survive disaster. With this perspective, the notion of a hypothetical imperative is something like (yet confusedly so) the unconditional will to survive. From the perspective of the moral dilemma, where the categorical 'ought' is informed by principles of hypothetical good and evil, the hypothetical imperative postulates a moral 'ought,' which has a sense that transcends the binary of merely hypothetical/categorical.

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[44] Schubert M. Ogden, The Reality of God: And Other Essays (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1992), 30-34.

Moral Truth and Religion

While the philosophical disagreement between Foot and Phillips had much to contribute to overall tactical moves in ethical discourse, both views are inadequate to explain the nature of the moral imperative in the context of a dilemma. First, moral dilemmas bear a family resemblance within the multiple usage of the imperative voice. However, that family resemblance does not provide a clear and definitive sense of the moral 'ought.' Second, these commands are first formed in the moral training by our instinctive behavior to survive. They are experienced as imperatives of beneficence closely tied to our unconditional interest for survival: the inescapable obligation to live. This imperative mood goes on to more sophisticated levels in our training process to include imperatives of justice. At last, a new family resemblance emerges when we reach moral dilemmas. The two imperatives of beneficence and justice are conflated to yield a new sense of the moral 'must': a sense of a condemnation to be free. The nature of normative commands in ethics appears to show a conditional sense, an unconditional sense and a type of non-conditioned sensibility.

The problem in giving a purely religious account of religion is apparent when one attempts to define the phenomena of religion precisely enough to distinguish that which is peculiar to religion from other elements of culture. All one has to do is notice of the major varieties of cultural forms that are often placed in the category of religion. Some so-called religions are creedal while others are preceptorial; some are theological while others are cosmological;

some are largely mythology while others are minimal; and some claim to have special revelation while others have none.[45] These vast differences make it difficult to isolate those components which are unique to religion and unmixed with other forms of culture.

In the book The Sacred Paths: Understanding the Religions of the World, Theodore Ludwig frames the study of religion under the rubric of: (1) the sacred story and historical context, (2) the world of meaning and theoretical teaching, and (3) the ritual practices and the good life.[46] According to Ludwig, the religious responses to the basic human concerns are captured in these frames. The advantage to this method is that one need not commit to a precise definition of religion before they can do preliminary work on cultural forms that ordinarily suggest a reference to religious experience. Furthermore, this multi-layered framing allows a particular religion to emphasize what its adherents want emphasized. If they are robust in the sacred story but anemic in ritual practices, one can do justice to the emphasis that particular religion gives to its basic human concerns. Also, if a religion is highly concentrated on the world of meaning and theoretical teaching, but considers the sacred story as a kind of prelude material, then this model lets the emphasis remain where it is.

The implication of this is recognized in the way the rubric circumscribes the investigator to limited areas of understanding about religious expressions.

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[45] Mortimer J. Adler, Truth in Religion: The Plurality of Religions and the Unity of Truth; An Essay on the Philosophy of Religion (New York: Macmillan, 1990), 50.
[46] Theodore M. Ludwig, The Sacred Paths: Understanding the Religions of the World, 4th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, 2006), 10-25.

Because a religious account would disperse its form in different ways throughout a cultural way of life, what one learns from a religion is in part relative to the type of question the person is seeking to have answered. This approach leads one to see that a religious form of life will yield different types of understandings.

For those who are interested in empirical questions about a religion, they will find their answers more or less, depending upon the kind of emphasis a religion places on metaphysical assertions. For those interested in philosophical questions about a religion, they will more or less discover answers in the world of meaning and theoretical teaching of the different religious accounts. For those interested in questions of ethics, they will investigate a religion's ritual practices in order to understand these practices and their relation to basic human questions. The different types of understandings a religion disperses (religious understandings, philosophical understandings, empirical understandings, ethical understandings, etc.) are readily available to the inquirer. This allows for philosophical questions of truth to find their necessary place in the dialogue by respectfully challenging a religion without a total violation of it.

Often when we speak of a philosophical understanding or knowledge of something, we implicitly refer to a standard or criteria for judging that understanding or knowledge. This criterion is truth; that is, we want a true understanding or a true knowledge. One obvious fact is that there is a plurality of religions. So then, the question arises in this context as to whether or not there is a unity to truth in religion.

Mortimer Adler, in his book, <u>Truth in Religion: The Plurality of Religions and the Unity of Truth</u>, argues that there is a unity to truth such that contradictory and incompatible religious claims must come under its judgment.[47] If a philosopher shares this conception of truth, there is still a place for them to ask their questions of a religion. At the same time, they must not be surprised if the religious devotee is puzzled by their interest in peripheral, tangential areas of a rich form of life, which for the religious practitioner continues to be strength and/or peace-generating. Understanding a religion at a minimum requires (1) hearing the sacred story and historical context, (2) conceptualizing the world of meaning and theoretical teaching, and (3) observing the ritual practices and the good life. Religious commitment is not necessary for an understanding that does justice to the religion. Religious commitment can possibly at times get in the way of an understanding that does the religion justice.

Kant's approach to moral theology is rich with analytical precision (one that moral theologians should be aware of), yet his method is not a sufficient alternative to the inadequacies of the remnant-corral-ethic model of moral theology apparent in the moral-issue articles in some official journals of Seventh-day Adventist publications. The Kantian view of morality differs from one that is more adequate for persons with commitment to the Christian tradition in that Kant's view conceives morality as something coming from reason alone. Reason for Kant is "nonhistorical, contextless, universal and eternal, which is close to

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[47] Adler, x.

saying that morality can grow out of thin air."[48] Kant, like any other investigator

who seeks to understand the form of life practiced by a committed disciple of

Jesus, must take another look at the sacred story. In the sacred story, Jesus is

immersed in the context of first century Palestinian Jewish life. This region was

under the imperial control of foreign invaders. The role of the Mosaic Law is

fundamental to the self-conception of the religious identity of the people.

It is from this background that the meaning of Jesus' alliance with the

prophetic movement of John the Baptist takes on a central role the Christ's own

identity. The prophetic tradition rejected a non-temporal *a priori* concern with

issues of ethics. Instead, prophetic work was immersed in the issues of present

injustice. Jesus was understood by his followers to be so committed to the

prophetic tradition that The Gospels picture him as an embodiment of a new

Moses.[49] From the Gospel writers' perspective, Jesus' moral vision surpassed

Moses and the goals of his message were more desirable. It is from this sacred

story that the world of meaning, sacred rituals, and the good life is to be

understood.

The articles in Ministry and Message magazines that intend to resolve

moral problems demonstrate an inflexible Biblical law ethic approach as

opposed to Kant, who is wedded to an inflexible rational law ethic approach to

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[48] This way of expressing the difference came out of a discussion with a colleague, Xiaoyu Zhu. She stated: "But your view is different. Sacred stories are contextual, historical, and concrete. Moral rightness and wrongness are shown when the stories are presented."

[49] C. Milo Connick, Jesus: The Man, the Mission, and the Message (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1974), 237.

resolving moral problems. Compare Figures 1 and 2 for similarities and differences.

	Enlightenment Model	Journal Model
F U N D A M E N T A L M E T H O D O L O G Y	**Kantian Rationalism**	**Legalistic Biblicism**
	Moral theology committed to reason	Moral theology committed to the Bible
	View God as a necessary postulate for moral motivation	Discover morals through a literalistic interpretive approach
	Inflexible and rational	Inflexible and literalistic

Figure 1. Rational Model   Figure 2. Legalistic Model

Unlike the two models shown above, the life of Jesus, as expressed within the sacred story of the gospel, presents a model of morality that is dynamic and flexible. It is a model that derives from a living context. The next chapter attempts a model that is more faithful to the Jesus of Nazareth narrative found in the Bible.

CHAPTER 4

An Organic-Prophetic-Liberation Model of Social Engagement

Elements of a Constructive Proposal for Moral Theology

To this point, we have examined two SDA publications and have learned

that each demonstrates an inadequate treatment of contemporary moral issues.

This examination, limited though it is, confirms that there is a need in our

prevailing global context for journalists of faith, when addressing ethical topics,

to operate from a model of moral theology that addresses the need of our times.

Furthermore, we have postulated that Seventh-day Adventist theological ethics

(because of its commitment to maintain a biblically informed morality) should

not retreat to the Enlightenment-age Kantian moral religion. In this chapter, I

provide the components that I consider fundamental for an Adventist

theological ethic. A suitable Adventist model will organically bind to the Sacred

Scriptures the *prima facie* moral principles it applies to a contemporary moral

problem. In addition, this model will apply a prophetic witness to the suffering of

people. The final goal of the model is the liberation of oppressed people. Before

advancing a constructive proposal, I want to acknowledge and review one

attempt in Ministry Magazine to provide a model for Adventist moral theology.

One Article Proposes a Model

It should be noted, that the above investigation in the Adventist Journal of

Ministry Magazine discovered only four articles from the Fall of 2001 to the Fall of

2005 that addressed ethical theory: one editorial article and three general

articles. By far, the most thorough treatment of the four is the article by John

Wong.[1] In this article, Wong proposes what he terms an "analytic, holistic schema for ethical decisions."[2]

The strength of his article is the concise survey it provides of moral theory. It is comprehensive yet brief. He moves in three stages from a description of ethics in general to a description/definition of Christian ethics, and finally on to an application of Christian ethics that is informed by his schema. Furthermore, Wong recognizes the inescapable need for the pastoral ministry to be informed and agile in matters of ethics. As he puts it, "ethics and ethical issues are unavoidably interspersed with a clergy person's life and ministry."[3]

Even though Wong's article has its strengths, when he purports to provide a 'holistic' approach to Christian ethics, he does so at the cost of an organic approach. If by holistic Wong means coherent—namely, his closed triangular model of (1) Christian norms, (2) situational concerns and (3) persons interacting together—then yes, his model is holistic. However, if holism includes the notion of life, then the natural organic outgrowth of the moral imperative from the biblical narrative to the situational concern is absent in his account. His schema can be applied rather mechanically. His method fails to provide the preconditions for organic holism.

When I judge these journals to be informed by or following a model of ethical discourse that is mechanical, I do so recognizing factors that are crucial

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[1] John B. Wong, "Ethics for Twenty-First-Century Clergy," Ministry Magazine, Sept. 2003, 20-23.
[2] Wong, 22.
[3] Wong, 20.

to the origins of the Adventist movement in modernity. Foremost, is the fact that the enlightenment presuppositions, which shaped the discourse in Western civilization, where the modern Adventist movement found its birthplace, also influenced the Adventist movement.

It is important to note that the Adventist movement, struggling to find its voice in the Christian evangelical mainstream, was in a polemical posture toward many enlightenment claims. All the same, as a child of the modern era, Adventism disagreements were over premises and not between presuppositions. In other words, Adventism adopted the epistemological aims of scientific rationalism. According to Morgan, while the founder of Millerite Adventism "rejected skeptical rationalism, . . . it was the Bible that then became for him a 'feast of reason.' By laying aside all commentaries and presuppositions, he could grasp the meaning of Scripture through the power of individual reason."[4]

An example of how the epistemological presuppositions that Adventists shared with the Enlightenment age impacted their rationale is the principle of Ockham's Razor in the use of inductive reasoning. According to Ockham's Razor, if you have two competing theories, the simpler theory is the best theory. Simpler means the one that uses the fewest presuppositions. How this works, however, is tricky when applied in a faith community that shares a sacred text. For example, if you accept the idea that God has revealed His will supernaturally in the Bible, then the conjectures of the historical critical methods in biblical

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[4] Morgan, 21.

studies use more presuppositions than a theory committed solely to the account of dogmatic theology and is therefore not the simplest explanation.

In the case of the deductive use of reasoning, Adventists added "propositional truths" of supernatural revelation derived from the Bible as premises in order to discover *a priori* moral truths. They then combined these "truths" with a series of premises from the *a posteriori* facts of moral situations. This presupposition, hinged on the notion of *a priori* truths that were discoverable before any contingent empirical factual matters were investigated, shares an affinity with Kant's reasoning. These *a priori* truths of reason set the limits for empirical inquiry and debate. Because biblical revelation is added to the *a priori* truths of reason (since it comes before any facts and is not based in our moral intuitions) one need only apply the moral imperatives of the Bible (particularly the Ten Commandments) to the particular circumstance that calls for moral action in order to do the right thing.

Furthermore, when combined with an apocalyptic reading of scripture and history, one can further distance oneself from wrestling with a moral dilemma or be lax in the discovery of the moral imperative that challenges problematic situations. After all, the imminent and final rescue of the righteous and the punishment of the wicked come when God breaks into our realm and settles the score. For these reasons, a new model for expressing Adventist ethics cries out to be discovered.

The components that are both in harmony with the Adventist theological heritage and are indispensable to an adequate biblically informed morality are

(1) organic moral themes, (2) courageous prophetic witness, and (3)

compassionate liberation sensibilities—freedom with responsibility. Such an

approach calls for a new model that is flexible and dynamic. What will follow is

an explication of the organic-prophetic-liberation model of social engagement.

A comparison of Figures 1, 2, and 3 will help to illustrate the difference between

the various models.

F U N D A M E N T A L   M E T H O D O L O G Y

Enlightenment Model	Dynamic Model	Journal Model
Kantian Rationalism	**Organic Prophetic Liberation**	**Legalistic Biblicism**
Moral theology committed to reason View God as a necessary postulate for moral motivation Inflexible and rational	Moral theology committed to an ongoing constructive theology Scripture, reason, tradition, and experience form ethical principles Flexible and justifiable	Moral theology committed to the Bible Discover morals through a literalistic interpretive approach Inflexible and literalistic
Figure 1. Rational Model	Figure 3. Dynamic Model	Figure 2. Legalistic Model

Moral Principles Emergent from Organic Biblical Themes

If there is any lesson to be learned from the work done in theological

ethics in the last century, it is the need to create an organic tie to the moral

principles found in the Bible. By organic, I mean the necessary and dynamic

nexus between the formative, generative and constitutive expressions of moral

theology that moves from the context of biblical studies toward the context of

contemporary situations and carries with it the guiding principles derived from

the narratives and themes dominant within sacred scripture. Joseph Sittler

attempts to make the proper space for framing a Christian ethic by beginning

with an analysis of the organic nature of biblical speech that unfortunately was

transposed into abstract propositions for instrumental purposes.[5] Sittler appears

to be pointing the finger at Kant when he writes about the "most religious form of

idolatry whereby the Holy is understood from the point of view of, made

malleable by, and turned into an instrument of, men's [sic] autonomous

purposes."[6] For Sittler, Kant's transposition of biblical speech into abstract

propositions violates its organic nature.

Donald McKim's chapter on liberal theology in his book The Bible in

Theology and Preaching describes the growth and development of a

theological tradition beginning with Friedrich Schleiermacher and culminating

with Harry Emerson Fosdick and Henry Nelson Wieman of the evangelical and

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[5] Joseph Sittler, The Structure of Christian Ethics (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1998), 3-23.
[6] Sittler, 15.

modernist schools of liberalism. McKim argues that Schleiermacher's work was in response to the philosophical revolution of Immanuel Kant.[7] Building on the totalizing work of Kant, Schleiermacher made space for religious belief within the new philosophical model.

According to McKim, Albrecht Ritschl builds on Schleiermacher's work by elevating ethical discourse to the space made for religious belief. Adolf von Harnack expanded this space further when he employed the kingdom of God motif, which Ritschl placed as one of the foci in his ellipse model of Christianity; the other focus point was redemption in his account of essential Christianity. For Harnack, the central message of Jesus was: (1) the kingdom of God, (2) the infinite value the Father places on the human soul, and (3) the supremacy of the commandment of love.[8]

According to one historian, the preconditions providing the milieu for the flourishing of liberal theology materialize from three sources. For example, McKim writes:

> These factors centered on what led to an emphasis on continuity rather than discontinuity in the world; those focused on the autonomy of human reason and experience instead of on an authoritative divine revelation; and those forces that stressed the dynamic rather than the static nature of the world and human life.[9]

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[7] Donald K. McKim, The Bible In Theology and Preaching (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), 41.

[8] McKim, 42.

[9] Ibid.

These new categories for viewing the world, i.e., continuity, autonomy, and dynamism, helped to shape a new view of the Bible, its origins and development.

For liberal theology, the content of revelation is not propositions in the Bible or doctrines derived from those propositions; rather, it is the person of Jesus Christ, including the preparation for revelation in Christ. Liberal theologians acknowledge the impurity of the biblical account that is the result of its checkered origin and development, yet this does not diminish the symbolic value of scripture as a religious book. Rather, it makes it the "meeting place," as it were, for confirming our present religious experiences. These experiences are what Fosdick calls "abiding experiences and changing categories."[10] Therefore, finding that which is biblically meaningful requires one to reframe those ancient understandings that correspond to our experiences today (only in different categories).

From this development, it can be shown that theological ethics, in contradistinction to philosophical ethics, values the Bible as a source for shaping moral thought. Yet this value of scripture is not simply to exploit an unsustainable biblical consumption of moral principles. Rather, it is an attempt at discovering an organic relationship between major biblical motifs and the patterns of which yield a design for nurturing moral principles.

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[10] McKim, 47.

As mentioned above, Harnack recognized that one of the major motifs of the Jesus tradition is faithful commitment to the kingdom of God. This kingdom of God metaphor is a resource for developing an ethical principle. Walter Rauschenbusch did exactly this. He designed a theme in a way that prohibited those who take the message of Jesus of Nazareth seriously from truncating the aims of the gospel to merely spiritual or supernatural ends. According to Rauschenbusch, the kingdom of God expresses the social dimensions of the gospel while eternal life expresses the personal dimension of the good news:

> In the synoptic teaching of Jesus all turns on the kingdom of God, and the life hereafter is rarely referred to; in the Gospel of John "eternal life" is the central word and the "kingdom of God" scarcely occurs. . . . A perfect religious hope must include both: eternal life for the individual, the kingdom of God for humanity.[11]

Here, the kingdom of God metaphor suggests a binding *prima facie* biblical principium for the moral principle of beneficence. There is an organic connection between the notion/idea of the kingdom of God and the welfare of the fallen created order. When we think about the kingdom of God metaphor in scripture, we do well to recognize how the biblical moral imperative for kingdom life requires us to dispense temporally the benefit of the eternal kingdom. This metaphor judges our actions in ways that show that as disciples we are subjects of another realm. In other words, the kingdom of God metaphor organically binds the moral principle of beneficence to the sacred narrative of the scripture and guides its application in the contemporary situational context.

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[11] Walter Rauschenbusch, <u>Christianity and the Social Crisis</u> (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 107.

In addition to the kingdom of God metaphor, we have seen from the article written by Smuts van Rooyen that the covenant motif is another metaphor that is prominent in scripture. I suggest that another binding *prima facie* biblical principium for the moral principle of justice is suggested by the metaphor of the covenants of God within the Bible. The Bible is replete with the covenant imagery. Bible scholars have identified the Adamic Covenant, the Noachic Covenant, the Abrahamic Covenant, the Mosaic Covenant, the Davidic Covenant, the New Covenant, and the Everlasting Covenant.[12] The notion of God being in covenant with the faithful suggests that God pledges his loyalty and faithfulness to a just process for making the kingdom's benefits realizable.

In the Creation/Redemption pattern in scripture, we find another binding *prima facie* biblical principium for the moral principle of liberty/freedom. Once more, it is pointed out by biblical scholars that the story of the Exodus and the liberation of the people of Israel takes on the same imagery as the creation story in Genesis with the parting/separation of the waters and the emergences of humanity from the earth. Creation expresses God's freedom to act while redemption expresses humankind's freedom from those forces that hold captive our divinely intended potentiality. The apostle Paul affirms this understanding when he writes, "for freedom Christ has set us free."[13]

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[12] O. Palmer Robertson, The Christ of the Covenants (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1980).
[13] Gal. 5:1 (NRSV).

This hermeneutic approach to the Bible recognizes the various voices within the text as being in a dynamic and dialectical interaction. It is the historical-biblical-method of taking the Bible as its own interpreter and recognizing that the tension within the text often is the result of many different voices and communities being heard. Nevertheless, for disciples of Jesus, his voice and method of interpreting the text has primacy. Jesus was selective in his use of the themes and images of God that the Old Testament pictured. For Jesus, the war deity Yahweh was not his picture of the divine. He saw God as a loving parent. This judicious handling of the sacred scripture empowers his followers to do likewise. The organic method of interpreting scripture is a judicious, selective method for extracting moral principles for a responsive moral theology for today.

Moral Practice: The Biblical Model of Prophetic Witness

Not only must a foundation for an Adventist theological ethic have the task of organically binding the sacred story to the *prima facie* moral principles that emerge from Holy Scripture, but in addition, it should constitute moral activism as witnessed by the prophetic tradition. As mentioned in the introduction, the image of the biblical prophet exemplifies the ways of speaking against injustice as it is manifested within the social-cultural-political landscape; namely, it is the moral dimension of lived faith. The term prophetic is not to be confused with apocalyptic. Apocalyptic writers present a vision of the future that abandons hope in this world and looks to another realm to end the

oppression of this world. In contrast, the primary role of the biblical prophet was not to foretell the future but to speak against present injustice.

This understanding is especially important for the Adventist movement, primarily because the work of John the Baptist—leader of the first Advent movement—was a prophetic work. John's message was one of social justice that he used as a vehicle to prepare the way for the Lord. Often in Adventism, the prophetic genre of scripture is confused with the apocalyptic genre of the Bible. Yet the difference between the prophetic and apocalyptic is crucial for the emphasis that is placed on the work of social justice.

The biblical prophet's work was rooted in hope. The prophet's desire was to make real the promises of Yahweh to the people by holding accountable the political and religious shepherds of Israel, i.e., the kings and priests. According to the prophetic ministry, as long as the people were in the land of promise there was hope to circumvent the curses and apprehend the blessings of the promise God gave to Abraham, Moses, and David. In contrast, the biblical apocalyptic work was rooted in despair, conflict, and calamity. The apocalyptic writer's desire was to look to another realm outside this world to rescue God's people from the intractable, evil forces that have rendered the believer's agency impotent. So often, the apocalyptic writer's visions are understood to predict the course of history. Elizabeth Achtemeier has correctly noted:

> Couched in often fantastic and bizarre language to hide their message from the governing authorities, apocalypses and particularly Daniel are not intended to predict the events that will take place in the future history of our time or any contemporary time. Rather, like Daniel, they are intended to encourage the

> faithful in a time of persecution by showing them the glory in the new age that awaits them beyond history, if they will only be faithful to the end.[14]

The prophet's feet were firmly rooted in history and recognized human agency in the historical processes. The apocalyptic writer was always anticipating another world. He had given up on his agency in this realm. He looked for an intrusion to rescue him from the world's harsh conditions. While the exiled apocalyptic writers were pessimistic about their captor's salvation, imaging them as wild beasts, the prophets were more hopeful about the moral agency of Judah's captors. Jeremiah, for example, could write a letter to the exiles in Babylon telling them to "seek the welfare of the city where [Yahweh] has sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare."[15]

John the Baptist, as an Adventist model of prophetic hope, has the hallmarks of a prophet in an apocalyptic world. He roots his ministry in the Second Isaiah's call for the remnant of Judah, left from the time of the exile, to be about the work of preparing the way for the LORD.[16] A clue to John's social-justice interpretation of Isaiah's passage for his day is evidenced by his signifying the symbols of social oppression as obstacles to the coming of the LORD: as Isaiah's exalted mountains, depressed valleys, crooked paths, and rough places.

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[14] Achtemeier, 151.
[15] Jer. 29:7 (NSRV).
[16] Is. 40:3-5 (NSRV).

In Luke's gospel, John the Baptist identifies the prevalence of social injustice as

his generation's obstacle to seeing the salvation of the LORD:

> He said to them, "Whoever has two coats must share with anyone
> who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise. . .Collect
> no more than the amount prescribed for you. . .Do not extort
> money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied
> with your wages.[17]

A contemporary model of the prophetic tradition is embodied in the

intellectual vocation of Cornel West. In his book, Prophesy Deliverance!: An Afro-

American Revolutionary Christianity, he defines the prophetic Christian:

> To prophesy is not to predict an outcome but rather to identify
> concrete evils. To prophesy deliverance is not to call for some
> otherworldly paradise but rather to generate enough faith, hope,
> and love to sustain the human possibility for more freedom. For me,
> to be a Christian is not to opt for some cheap grace, trite comfort,
> or childish consolation but rather to confront the darker sides and
> the human plights, of societies and souls with the weak armor of
> compassion and justice.[18]

In this definition, it can be observed that West views a dialectical relationship

between prophetic Christianity and democracy; that is, "the human possibility

for more freedom." West views democracy "as a mode of being, a way of life, a

disposition toward the world that is flexible, protean, and improvisational

existential practice."[19] Democracy and prophetic Christianity are the key

conversation partners in West's united front to make the world more humane.

In Prophesy Deliverance!, West identifies two sources for Afro-American

critical thought: (1) American pragmatism and () Prophetic Christian thought.

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[17] Luke 3:10ff (NRSV).
[18] Cornel West, Prophesy Deliverance!: An Afro-American Revolutionary
Christianity, anniversary ed. (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2002), 6.
[19] Cornel West, Prophesy Deliverance, 8-9.

The prophetic Christian sensibility is derived from the evangelical and pietistic

Christian roots of slave religion. The prophetic dimension, found in the Christian

roots of the enslaved African population, upheld the moral criteria of individuality

and democracy.[20] Note the distinction between individualism and individuality.

According to West, the Christian notion of individuality precludes any notion of

perfectionism. Tied to his concept of individuality are the twin beliefs of (1) the

dignity of persons and (2) the depravity of persons. These beliefs about human

individuality are examples of the tension embedded in prophetic Christianity.

With its commitment to two contrary views of human nature, the prophetic

Christian recognizes that:

> human beings possess the capacity to transform prevailing realities
> for the better, and yet are prone to do so imperfectly. . . . The
> prophetic Christian dialectic of human nature and human history
> produces democracy as its second fundamental norm.
> Democracy requires that accountability—of institutions to
> populace, of leaders to followers, of preachers to laity—be the
> center of any acceptable social vision.[21]

This moral rudder of American democracy is informed by the inspirational visions

of Emerson, Baldwin, Melville and Morrison.[22] According to West, Marxism comes

close to the ethical agility of prophetic Christian thought expressed in the

democratic mode of being: it is important to note, however, that Marx fails to

give an elevating account of human struggle.

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[20] Cornel West, Prophesy Deliverance!, 16.
[21] Cornel West, Prophesy Deliverance!, 17-18.
[22] Cornel West, Democracy Matters, chap. 3.

According to the book <u>Democracy Matters: Winning the Fight Against Imperialism</u>, West thinks Marxism as a theory provides an inadequate normative basis for morality. In addition, he criticizes what he calls Constantinian American Christianity. West views the dominant form of Christianity in America as a force against the moral democratic energies that attempt to hold leaders accountable. He identifies three dogmas that suffocate global democratic energies: free-market fundamentalism, aggressive militarism, and escalating authoritarianism.[23] At the origins of the American project, the test for democratic commitment failed at the level of racial subjugation and imperial expansion against Amerindians. September 9-11 provides another turning point—a unique test case for whether or not democracy will win out over empire. The 9-11 event does so because the subsequent discourse on leader's accountability to the people proposes a false disjuncture between either the evil of imperialism or the evil of terrorism.

West argues that the three traditions that fund the forces of democracy are: (1) Socratic questioning, (2) Prophetic witness, and (3) Blues sensibility: tragicomic hope must be vigilant during this time in order to keep at bay the imperial vigor.[24]

In keeping with his prophetic vision of elevating human struggle, West finds frightening the prevailing nihilistic forms of evangelical, paternalistic and

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[23] Cornel West, <u>Democracy Matters</u>, 1-6.
[24] Cornel West, <u>Democracy Matters</u>, 16-18.

sentimental submission to empire.[25] In order to counter this nihilistic mood, it is vital to tap into the radical democratic experiments of populism, progressivism, and trade unionism. Each democratic movement had its leaders: farmers, the middle class, and the workers.[26] West points out that the imperialist strategy in the Middle East can only succeed if the past and present prophetic Jewish and prophetic Islamic traditions are ignored and drowned out by the clerical, legalistic, and mystical traditions.[27]

It is at this point that prophetic Christianity can play a key role in challenging the dominant form of American Constantinian Christianity. In West's view, Constantinian Christianity is on the side of imperialism; it is antidemocratic. Prophetic Christianity is on the side of democracy. Pointing to the fact that progressive movements in the American tradition were headed by prophetic Christians, West establishes the limits of a secular strategy:

> [A] purely secular fight won't be won. As my Princeton colleague Jeffrey Stout has argued in his magisterial book *Democracy and Tradition (2003)*, in order to make the world safe for King's legacy and reinvigorate the democratic tradition, we must question not only the dogmatic assumptions of Constantinians but those of many secular liberals who would banish religious discourse entirely from the public square and admonish disillusioned prophetic Christians not to allow their voices and viewpoints to spill over into public square.[28]

West correctly notes that liberalism, secularism, and ecclesiasticism are all anemic approaches to a comprehensive strategy for an engaging role for all

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[25] Cornel West, <u>Democracy Matters</u>, 30-36.
[26] Cornel West, <u>Democracy Matters</u>, 52.
[27] Cornel West, <u>Democracy Matters</u>, chap. 4.
[28] Cornel West, <u>Democracy Matters</u>, 159-60.

democrats, including those who are committed to democracy as the moral

rudder in these times because of the faith of prophetic Christianity. Prophetic

Christians are committed to democracy because they value liberty.

Moral Context: Liberation Sensibilities

The recent emergence of Liberation Theology has brought with it the

awareness that all theology is contextual. This emphasis upon context is crucial

to understanding the role that liberation plays in the method of moral theology.

To what extent liberal political theory informs the moral framework for Liberation

Theology goes beyond the scope of this essay. Nevertheless, Thomas Hobbes'

analysis of our natural right to liberty cannot be overlooked. His views inform any

discussion on liberation themes.[29] His analysis attempts to answer the question,

"why it is good/right to pursue a moral program that takes seriously human

liberty?" Hobbes' answer is that it is right because it is a natural right based in our

passions and from the natural right we derive a natural law based in our reason.

Liberation theologians like James Cone do not begin with the dictates of

reason in order to frame the moral imperative for liberty. For Cone, the source

that informs the moral status of liberty derives from the sacred narratives.

Salvation, as it is expressed in the gospel of Jesus, is a gift of faith, while liberty is a

risk of faith. Cone writes, "Freedom is not a gift but is a risk that must be taken."[30]

The "must" here is a moral must, mandated by the gracious act of a redeeming

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[29] Thomas Hobbes, "The Social Contract," in The Right Thing to Do: Basic Readings in Moral Philosophy, ed. James Rachels and Stuart Rachels, 4th ed. (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2007), 60-63.
[30] Cone, Risks of Faith, 48.

God: "For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery."[31] This liberty is not intrinsic to our status as created beings, but is based on our status as ransomed human beings. It is not a law of our created natures, but an imperative of our redeemed status.

JoAnne Marie Terrell writes on the theme of God as emphasized in the reflective discipline of Liberation Theology. Drawing on quotations from scripture, hymnody, and theologians, she argues that liberation theologians are to be faithful signifiers of God's presence in our efforts for "survival, liberation, and creative self-expression."[32] This suggests that the risk of freedom in a liberation theology is not a risk left purely to the machinations of human social contracts. This is where Hobbes' mutual agreement ends the natural state of war, but expects to find a witness to God's presence in our liberative activity. In other words, the work of liberation is the work of the Kingdom, as Gustavo Gutierrez has asserted:

> Moreover, we could even say that the historical moment of liberation is itself an expression of the growth of the Kingdom, to some extent a moment of salvation, although not the advent of the Kingdom itself or of complete salvation. It is a realization of the Kingdom in history, and as such an announcement of the fullness of the Kingdom which is beyond history.[33]

According to Terrell, this expectation thinking, awaiting the creative expression of the Kingdom is the difference between liberation theological

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[31] Gal. 5:1 (NRSV).

[32] JoAnne Marie Terrell, "God," in Handbook of U.S. Theologies of Liberation, ed. Miguel A. De La Torre (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2004), 15.

[33] Gustavo Gutierrez, "The Task and Content of Liberation Theology," in The Cambridge Companion to Liberation Theology, ed. Christopher Rowland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 34

approaches and the orthodox approach to the study of God. Orthodox approaches begin by positing the aseity of God, which for Karl Barth infers radical freedom on the part of God. However, liberation theology recognizes a self-evident truism in the freedom of humanity: theology must take into consideration the historical contingency of human free expression, for in its essence theology is the doings and talking of humanity. Theology is how humankind describes our ultimate concern in empowering narratives, which assists us to forge our way through this evil world. These ultimate concerns for a Kingdom-focused liberation are embodied in the narratives of the biblical story of the Exodus, the prophets, and the Passion of the Christ.

This emphasis placed on the historically contingent options for the creative human expression is meant to prioritize the context of oppression:

> If we are to understand the meaning of liberation we must first understand the form that domination takes, the nature of its location, and the problems it poses for those who experience it as both a subjective and an objective force . . . there is no 'average' ordinary reader and no 'average' context of poverty and oppression.[34]

This stress on context highlights how the liberation theologian reorients the theological task to be both reflective and active. The result is that liberation theologians are more concerned with anthropodicy than they are with theodicy, and with theopraxy more than they are with theology. They are more concerned with human agency than they are with divine intervention in matters

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[34] Gerald West, "The Bible and the Poor," in The Cambridge Companion to Liberation Theology, ed. Christopher Rowland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 136.

of moral ill that lie within human control. Therefore, while human hope may be centered on a liberating and empowering deity, this hope is that the Divine-One is a witness to our efforts at finding creative ways to redress evil and injustice.

One can appreciate Terrell when she distinguishes the two theological traditions: Classical and Liberationist, by highlighting the disjuncture between the radical freedoms of God, i.e., God's aseity and the frustrated limited freedom of humanity. She writes, "Liberation God-talk does *not* speak abstractly, apart from the concrete realities of people who are stratified favorably and unfavorably by the race, gender, sexual orientation, able-bodiedness, etc."[35] This emphasis upon the human context of impediments to liberty in liberation theology is indispensable for any suitable approach to doing moral theology. Furthermore, one can appreciate how this emphasis on the part of the liberation theologian focuses investigation on the topic of theodicy. Terrell expresses it thusly:

> The liberationist asks: What does what we confess about God make us do about pain? How do we respond lovingly, creatively, ethically, and reasonably to the pain of oppression given the demands made on us by our relationship with a God whom we claim is love and who is generative, ethical, and transrational? What does God's own suffering (in Christ) speak to us about how we are to manage our own and others suffering?[36]

This statement clarifies how theology can "go on holiday" when it moves into questions and concerns that are abstracted from the real-world pain of persons

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[35] Terrell, 8.
[36] Terrell, 11.

in concrete situations. Again she writes, "Only sociopaths feel only their own pain."[37] Liberation theology aims not to become sociopathic.

Rowland, Gutierrez, Berryman, Aponte, and Gonzalez combine to give a survey of liberation theology from a Latin American perspective. They highlight the history and development, the ecclesial challenges, the issues that are of central concern for Latin American constituencies, and how these issues shape the theological language, methodology, and content of these groups. In this manner Gutierrez captures the story of how this way of acting and being human under adverse circumstances yields an intellectual tradition and cultural/ideological product captured in this manner: "From this arises the reaffirmation of life as the prime human right, and, from the Christian viewpoint, as a gift of God that we must defend."[38]

The commitment to life-sustaining forces is the result of a commitment to the resurrection account in liberation theology. For this reason, liberation theology is said to be a theology of hope. Gutierrez looks to this in the sacred story of Easter Sunday: "This reality of death and sin is a negation of the resurrection. For this reason, the witness of the resurrection is he who can always ask ironically (according to Scripture) 'Death, where is your victory'?"[39]

We can appreciate these authors' treatment of the discoveries of social analysis and how the "international division of labor," with its disparities between

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[37] Terrell, 11.
[38] Gutierrez, 24.
[39] Gutierrez, 37.

North and South societies, became a criterion that awakens the religious sensibilities to the poor.[40] The commitment of Latin American liberation theology to the poor given these aims is inescapable. In addition, the discussion on the subject of "identity" and its ability to shape the theological paradigm is rich and reflective.[41]

A Black theology of liberation is grounded between the polarities of black/white in the North American context and Black theology's commitment to liberation is seen in its solidarity with despised races. The context of a Black theology of liberation takes as a starting point the concrete situation of race-inspired oppression in the United States of America. The overwhelming majority of so-called "Black people" in the United States are a hybrid origin of European-Amerindian-African descent. The principle of solidarity with the despised race of Western civilization provoked these hybrid peoples to self-identify with oppressed brothers and sisters by embracing the pejorative term "black." Black theology is an attempt to express liberative hope beyond the parochial limits of "our kind" of suffering. Black theology is an attempt to call all humanity: "light bright or even white" to identify with the symbol of oppression in the history of the United States of America that manifests itself in material ways such as poverty, discrimination, and such.

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[40] Phillip Berryman, "Latin American Liberation Theology," in Handbook of U.S. Theologies of Liberation, ed. Miguel A. De La Torre (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2004), 142.
[41] Justo L. Gonzalez, "Latino/a Theology," in Handbook of U.S. Theologies of Liberation, ed. Miguel A. De La Torre (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2004), 209ff.

While Gutierrez distinguishes the different types of liberation,[42] his way of viewing liberation is expressed as a freedom from some obstacle rather than a freedom to creative expression. This is a view of liberty tied closely to Hobbes' analysis of the natural right to liberty, and while necessary, this view is insufficient for the freedoms needed in the current context of global oppression. In the context of the historic problem of race in the Northern hemisphere of the Americas, the context for domestic liberty is intertwined with the global manifestations of oppression.

The Adventist Legacy of Social Justice

What I propose in this chapter is to establish a model for doing moral theology that is flexible and responsive to the current and emerging moral context. The organic-prophetic-liberation model is a proposal that is in large part based upon a heuristic that enables one to discover possibilities for a responsive Adventist morality for today's context. A legacy for this model already exists through the efforts of others committed to the Adventist movement. This heritage not only provides a resource for the model proposed in this project, but has been an inspiration to guide in the project's development. My view is inspired by many figures, but chiefly from my studies at La Sierra University under the mentorship of Charles Teel, Jr. He has almost single-handedly helped me reclaim an Adventist heritage of social justice.

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[42] Gutierrez, 26.

From its earliest days, the Adventists movement had voices that spoke out for social justice. Men and women responded to the issues of their day. J. N. Andrews, an early Adventist intellectual, challenged the hypocrisy of the American republic on its professed principles of freedom and equality when he wrote, "Why is it that the Negro race are reduced to the rank of chattels personal and bought and sold like brute beasts?"[43] Andrews is an example of an early Adventist intellectual who spoke to the moral context, which called for a liberative voice.

Anson Byington was another early figure who challenged the denomination's apocalyptic sensibility over and against the prophetic imperative. Anson Byington, the older brother of John Byington and the first president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, (1) bound the moral imperative to the sacred text (in order to redress the institution of slavery) and (2) spoke with a prophetic voice, as can be seen in this quote from Douglas Morgan's book:

> Byington grew disenchanted with the *Review* by 1859 because of its passivity on the issue of slavery and wrote announcing that he would not be renewing his subscription: "I dare not tell the slave that he can afford to be contented in his bondage until the Savior comes however near we may believe his coming. Surely the editor of the *Review* could not afford to go without his breakfast till then. If it was our duty to remember those in bonds as bound with them eighteen hundred years ago, it must be our duty still."...The following month, Byington wrote again, citing gospel as well as apocalyptic passages of Scripture.[44]

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[43] J. N. Andrews, "Thoughts on Revelation XIII and XIV," <u>Advent Review and Sabbath Herald,</u> 1 May 1851, 83-84.

[44] Morgan, 28.

This history is especially important for my work in this project for it demonstrates the early concern that Adventist journals had to speak to the changing moral concerns.

I disagree with Douglas Morgan's thesis, which attempts to conflate the prophetic and apocalyptic tendencies and view Adventism mainly from the apocalyptic perspective. I do agree, however, when he writes, "Adventists indeed gradually incorporated Anson Byington's view that believers could take prophetic action to restrain the 'dragonic' influences in America and nourish the nation's 'lamblike' qualities."[45] Unfortunately, Morgan's thesis does not recognize this incorporation as the seeds of a prophetic tradition that is in tension with the apocalyptic sensibilities within a bifurcated movement.

This failure causes him in part to misunderstand the lessons to be learned from my former teacher Charles Teel, Jr. Thus Morgan writes:

> The theme of apocalyptic as a source for social consciousness entailed a broadened conception of remnant. Teel, a religion professor at La Sierra University in California, described the remnant as a prophetic community "always called to stand against those forces that oppose God's truth and justice in the present." Not only did he call for recognition of the social dimension of the radical obedience that is to characterize the remnant, but Teel decried the exclusivism, triumphalism, and incapacity for self-criticism that went with strict identification of the remnant with the Seventh-day Adventist Church.[46]

It is unclear why "the remnant as a prophetic community" is to be viewed as an apocalyptic theme. While it is true that there is overlap between the prophetic

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[45] Morgan, 30.
[46] Morgan, 182-83.

and the apocalyptic strains within Adventism, it is this refusal to recognize the distinction between the types of communities that too often results in the prophetic energies of Adventist activism being absorbed into the apocalyptic malaise of Adventist fatalism.

Despite this critique, Morgan does an excellent job in recovering the history of social activism in the Adventist heritage. He reviews the Adventists part in the temperance movement, their role in fighting for the religious liberties of all Sabbatarians (siding with a religious pluralism rather than pushing for a Christian America), their robust social agenda during the industrial age, and their determination in time of war to become conscientious cooperators. Furthermore, he rightly notes Ellen White's heavy dependence on the prophetic writers of the Bible in her attempts to compel Adventists to serve the poor.[47] In the end, Morgan recognized how much the past Adventist movement depended on a principle-based approach in responding to changing moral concerns. According to Morgan, Adventist activism was guided by the principles of righteousness, justice, peace, freedom, and dissent.[48]

Chapter Summary

In summary, in Figure 4, I diagram a concept map that attempts to clarify the model of organic-prophetic-liberation. It is a model for moral theology that is dynamic and user-friendly. This model takes the larger context of oppression and finds the practice of prophetic witness within that context. It then evaluates

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[47] Morgan, 60.
[48] Morgan, 51-57.

what guiding moral principles predominate in speaking hope to the context of oppression. This leads to elucidating the major biblical narratives and themes that uphold those principles.
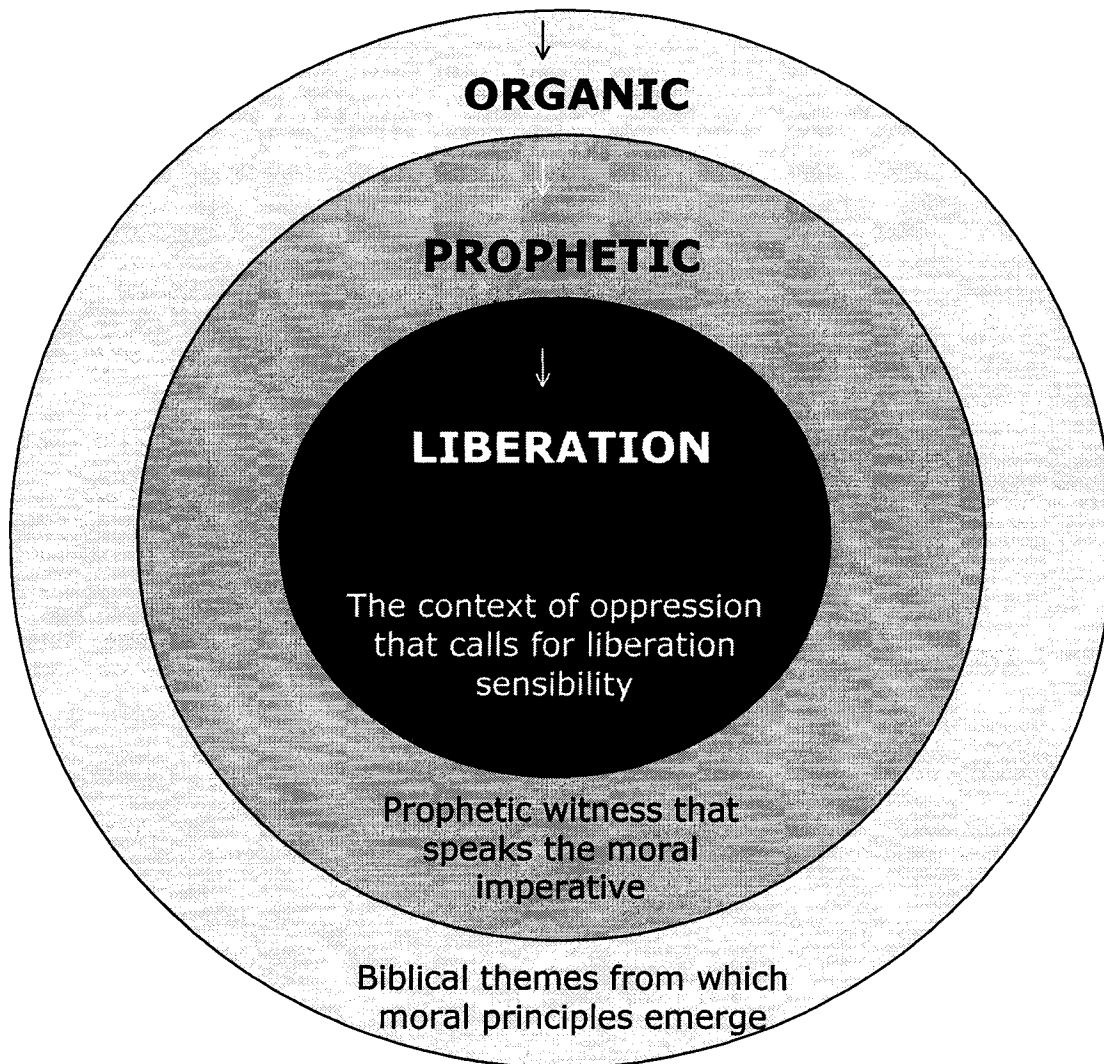

Figure 4. Organic-Prophetic-Liberation Model

CHAPTER 5

Applying the Organic-Prophetic-Liberation Model of Social Response:
On the Problem of Legislating Race Relations

On the Choice of the Moral Problem of Race Relations as an Example

From the previous chapters it has been argued that the traditional

Adventist's model of moral theology limits the options for responses to present

moral issues. A case was also made for why the enlightenment rational model of

moral theology would be undesirable in that it jettisons the sacred text as a

serious resource for moral guidance. Furthermore, it has been asserted that both

the traditional and rational models share the same problem of inflexibility (either

with reason or with a biblical literalism). Therefore, I have proposed a model of

moral theology that is dynamic, flexible, and yet justifiable. With an explicit

model to inform an Adventist response to the changing face of contemporary

moral issues, I now seek to provide an example of how to apply this model to

one moral issue in particular: racial discrimination.

I acknowledge that Black Americans are not the only ones to fall victim to

the harms of social injustice, nonetheless, racial discrimination remains a pressing

moral issue for Black Americans. My reason for choosing this topic as a case

example is derived from my personal struggle with what it means to be Black in

20th and 21st century America. In addition, I am convinced that the "original sin"

in the founding of the American republic was imperial expansion via racial

subjugation. As Cornel West puts it:

The contingent origins of American democracy and the ignoble beginnings of imperial America go hand in hand. This dynamic and complex intertwining of racial subjugation and democratic flourishing, of imperial resistance (against the British) and imperial expansion (against Amerindians)—driven primarily by market forces, to satisfy expanding populations and greedy profiteers—sets the stage for the uneven development of the best and worst of American history.[1]

At a time when there is much talk about the imperialist tendencies of the American government, it is important to trace the logic of race in "the uneven development of the best and worst of American history." By so doing, the history of this reasoning helps to frame and track a recurring pattern of how an up-until-now intractable tool may play a role in causing continued harms and injustices.

To those who suspect a connection between America's history of racial subjugation and its history of imperialism, it is no surprise that that in the existing climate of an aggressive international foreign policy, the domestic agenda in the 2006 midterm elections, revisited legislation on race relations. The Michigan affirmative action law is one example. This state amendment, known as The Michigan Civil Rights Initiative, received a fair amount of television media attention that focused on the language, which read on the ballot as:

A PROPOSAL TO AMEND THE STATE CONSTITUTION TO BAN AFFIRMATIVE ACTION PROGRAMS THAT GIVE PREFERENTIAL TREATMENT TO GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS BASED ON THEIR RACE, GENDER, COLOR, ETHNICITY OR NATIONAL ORIGIN FOR PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION OR CONTRACTING PURPOSES.[2]

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[1] West, Democracy Matters, 14.
[2] State of Michigan, Department of State, Statewide Ballot Proposal Status, The Michigan Civil Rights Initiative, 20 Sept. 2006, 2 [online]; accessed 15 Dec. 2006, available from http://www.michigan.gov/documents/Statewide_Bal_Prop_Status_145801_7.pdf.

This amendment was passed. One might wonder why this legislation is important, given that we are in an international climate of the so-called "war on terror." At a time when the nation's resources are consumed by a war, why is the domestic energy geared to a legislative agenda that invokes terms of race, color, and ethnicity?

This chapter provides an example article that applies the organic-prophetic-liberation model of social engagement as the moral theology to critique the problem of legislating race relations. Taking as my pattern the diagram in Figure 4, I apply the organic-prophetic-liberation model of social engagement to a contemporary moral problem. First, I take the context that calls for an attentive liberative voice: race-based affirmative action laws. On both sides of the issue, there are cries for liberty, justice, and beneficence. Second, I find as prophetic witnesses to creative possibilities for a solution the community of legal practitioners and scholars who are engaged in the discipline of Critical-Race-Theory. These scholars/practitioners challenge the Enlightenment-informed legal dogma of justice: a definition that places emphasis on fair procedure rather than equitable results. Third, I organically bind the moral principles of beneficence, justice, and liberty from a story in the life of Jesus' encounter with a Canaanite woman.

<u>An Example Article on the Problem of Legislating Race Relations</u>

Both recent and ancient history evidence laws that intend to govern and define race relations. The question of human difference has been a topic of

discourse from earliest written records. Human difference has been arranged in categories called races. How one understands the concept of race depends upon the nature of the question. Cornel West believes that if race denotes a classification of skin complexion, then the modern concept began in 1684 with Francois Bernier, a French physician.[3] Martin Bernal suggests that if the primary designation for race is supposed genetic difference, then David Hume's 18th century "polygenetic view of human origins" is the beginning of the modern concept of race.[4] If race is to describe the differences in culture and phenotype due to the influence of environment, then the beginning of the ancient concept of race may be found in Plato.[5]

These options make it clear that hypothesis on the nature of human differences through racial taxonomies are fluid and go back as far as the biblical record. Particularly noticeable is the history of race legislation found in the Judeo-Christian Holy Scriptures. The Genesis accounts of racial/ethnic origin are found in the myths of the 'Generations of Noah' and the 'Tower of Babel' recorded in Chapters 10 and 11. The former myth of the generations has been viewed as a primitive genetic theory of racial origins, while the latter myth of the tower has been conceived as an environmental theory that explains the origin of

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[3] Cornel West, <u>The Cornel West Reader</u> (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 1999), 258-59.
[4] Martin Bernal, <u>Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization</u>, vol. 1, <u>The Fabrication of Ancient Greece</u> (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1987), 203-04.
[5] Plato, <u>Laws: Book V</u>, 696d.

races.[6] This highlights the speculative nature, even among the biblical writers, on the concept of racial difference. For the Christian whose life is informed by the Sacred Scripture, recognizing that the concept of race has been used whimsically, even among Bible writers, the practice of legislating race relations must be viewed as questionable, at best. If moral theology provides a critique on the practice of legislating race relations, what would it look like? Are there examples from the Bible that suggest a model for this type of critique? Can any attempt to develop a theological critique based solely upon the Bible be an adequate resource for guidance and direction on this question?

The Bible has racial legislations that are embedded in older legends and myths about race. The Hamite myth is the first such preamble to patriarchal law.[7] This narrative of the curse of Ham's Son, Noah's grandson, Canaan, has been used to justify all kind of harms to the people of the land of Palestine and to justify the African slave trade. In addition, the Mosaic laws regulate the intermarriage between Israelites and other nations.[8] There are also Deuteronomic laws that allow for, yet determine, the limits of various people.[9] Questioning whether these groups are appropriately understood in racial categories, rather than national or ethnic groups, is to put the cart before the

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[6] This is an argument that I previously read in a journal, but I have been unable to retrieve the article. Nevertheless, the idea is not original to me.
[7] Gen. 9:20-29 (NRSV).
[8] Deut. 7:1-4 (NRSV).
[9] Deut. 23:3-8 (NRSV).

horse.[10] To assert that these laws are not laws that legislate race relations,

presumes we know what laws can govern race relations. First, let us define what

we mean by racial groupings in order to establish a clear indication of those laws

that regulate groups of people. This task, in light of the cultural function of the

Hamite myth in Hebrew society, is especially important. When laws that grew out

of legends intended to bind a certain people together serve to emphasize

xenophobic irrationality towards another group of people, they might resonate

culturally with the group attempting to settle the land of Canaan, but they fail in

the court of reason on matters of social justice.

In more recent times the attempt has been made to establish a just

society by legislating boundaries for human difference using the category of

race. In the United States of America, the problem of race relations is

experienced intensely. It has had a long legal and economic history instantiated

in the racially aggravated African slave trade, along with a political history in the

apartheid laws of the southern states.[11] More recently, we have had the

passage of the Civil Rights Act along with President Lyndon Johnson's Executive

Order 11246. These laws initiated a racial justice program.

The Supreme Court cases regarding the University of Michigan's race-

informed admissions practices reveal the political difficulties underlying the

problem of adjudicating race relations. What is demonstrated in the analysis

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[10] Cain Hope Felder Troubling Biblical Waters: Race, Class, and Family (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1989), 37-48.
    [11] Eugene D. Genovese, Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made (New York: Vintage Books, 1976), 25-49.

that follows is that the Supreme Court of our land, given the chance to arbitrate race relations, cannot say yes or no, so they say yes *and* no. Adjudicating race relations with procedural doctrines of supposed neutrality is a problem that cannot be solved by the tools of liberal social institutions. It needs a motivation that transcends the cultural expressions of hegemonic aims and objectives. This transcendental way out needs to be conceived in ways compatible with the creative aims humans desire and find necessary for their growth.

In this essay, I provide an analysis of two recent cases that provoked the Michigan Civil Rights Initiative. This exercise illustrates the problem of legislating race relations. Next, I turn to the need for a constructive moral theological proposal that can help to clarify the moral problem of legislating race relations, which centers on the model of Jesus' encounter with the Canaanite woman recorded in the gospels.

Recent Cases Adjudicating Race Relations

The recently passed 2006 Michigan State initiative to ban affirmative action laws is closely related to two cases that originally sparked the proposition. The recent social climate, including the legal precedent set by United States Supreme Court decisions regarding the University of Michigan's undergraduate and law school admissions policy, which ruled with respect to whether enrollment preferences should be given to those from underrepresented racial backgrounds, has once again called us to revisit the centuries-old issue of race

relations in America.[12] Two United States Supreme Court majority opinions express the high court's rationale related to the University of Michigan's enrollment policies. The two legal opinions are those of Chief Justice William Rehnquist's Majority Opinion in *Gratz v. Bollinger* (2003) and Justice Sandra Day O'Connor's Majority Opinion in *Grutter v. Bollinger* (2003).[13]

The former Chief Justice William Rehnquist's comments on the Court's decision, in favor of Jennifer Gratz and Patrick Hamacher against the University of Michigan, expressed the view that the undergraduate admissions policy of the University of Michigan violated the constitutional legal protections of the two.[14] In this case, the Justices viewed the admissions denial of two Caucasian students to the University of Michigan as an unjust act. This is because the two applicants were believed to have the necessary qualifications, yet the standard of necessary qualifications was not sufficient for a competitive placement due to admission policies adopted by the University, which favored certain "underrepresented minorities."[15] The former Chief Justice noted that the final decision was informed by the fact that "The University explained that the 'development of the selection index for admissions in 1998 changed only the

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[12] Daniel Bonevac, <u>Today's Moral Issues: Classic and Contemporary Perspectives,</u> 5th ed. (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2006), 608-21. This book provides a redacted version of the opinions.
[13] Bonevac, 608-21.
[14] Bonevac, 608.
[15] Bonevac, 608-09.

mechanics, not the substance of how race and ethnicity were considered in admissions.'"[16]

The third factor that weighed heavily on the Court's decision was the legal precedent set by Justice Powell's opinion in the case of the *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke*. Justice Powell offers principles that follow a "strict scrutiny analysis" on issues related to the individual rights guaranteed by the equal protection clause in the Fourteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution.

The University of Michigan argued that they met the strict scrutiny by using a principle they called the "narrowly tailored" principle[17] conjoined with another criterion; that is, the "principle of individualized consideration."[18] They contested that together the two principles operate to ensure that the University only allows race as *a* factor but not as *the* decisive factor in matters of selection for school admission.[19] Accordingly, race was narrowly tailored because it was not the decisive factor in admissions and therefore, it would provide individualized consideration that is not limited to—yet is associated with—race.

Nevertheless, Justice Rehnquist claimed the University failed to meet the standard of strict scrutiny. The admissions program was not flexible enough and even demonstrated an internal lack of confidence within the admissions process by employing a flagging program to review cases where the systems flaws would

[16] Bonevac, 609.
[17] Bonevac, 610.
[18] Bonevac, 610.
[19] Bonevac, 610.

have denied admission to a prospective student unwisely.[20] The University of Michigan argued that there is a practical problem in applying the flexibility standards when they have a great volume of applications.[21] Yet, the problem of practicability was not enough to sway the Court.

In another related case concerning the University of Michigan (Grutter v. Bollinger), Justice Sandra Day O'Connor delivered the majority opinion of the Court. This case involved Barbara Grutter versus University of Michigan's Law School. In this case, however, the Court sided in favor of the University and against the petitioner. This case also included a Caucasian whose application, this time to the University of Michigan's Law School, was denied. Ms. Grutter demonstrated outstanding academic ability and so felt the University's admissions program was biased against those applicants from a "disfavored racial group."[22]

Once again, the Bakke case, which reached no majority decision, informed the reasoning of the Court. Justice Powell pioneered the rationale for any "constitutional analysis of race conscious admissions policies."[23] In her written opinion, Justice O'Connor interprets the principle of strict scrutiny to mean "that such classifications [of race] are constitutional only if they are narrowly tailored to further compelling governmental interests."[24] So then, a

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[20] Bonevac, 611.
[21] Bonevac, 612.
[22] Bonevac, 614.
[23] Bonevac, 614-15.
[24] Bonevac, 615.

compelling governmental interest, vague as that may be, is reason enough to meet the strict scrutiny of the Court and avoid the charge of violating the equal protection right guaranteed to each citizen. To put it in her words, "the use of race is justified by a compelling state interest."[25] In the case of the University of Michigan's Law School, the compelling interest was diversity.

In this case, the principle of flexibility in individualized consideration was invoked; only this time the University was commended for not being mechanical in limiting race as a decisive factor. There was no quota formula, "all factors that may contribute to student body diversity are meaningfully considered alongside race in admissions decisions."[26] The lower Court of Appeals affirmed the race-neutral alternatives utilized by the Law School in addition to race-conscious factors.

It appears from an analysis of these two opinions that the 'strict scrutiny' standard and the principle of a 'narrowly tailored' consideration of race are sufficient criteria for guiding a race-informed if not race-based college admissions policy. Regardless of the agreement on these criteria, major ethical problems of larger magnitude remain. The first is the problem of ethical idealism versus ethical realism. Persons and nations are only ethically responsible for what they can realistically achieve. This brings to light the practical problems of the

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[25] Bonevac, 615.
[26] Bonevac, 619.

University's admissions goal in light of tens of thousands of applicants. In his

Majority Opinion, the Chief Justice asserted that:

> Respondents contend that '[t]he volume of applications and the
> presentation of applicant information make it impractical for [LSA]
> to use the...admissions system' upheld by the Court today in
> Grutter. But the fact that the implementation of a program
> capable of providing individualized consideration might present
> administrative challenges does not render constitutional an
> otherwise problematic system.[27]

The question of a realizable approximation of justice and equality is the only fair

goal to strive for. The Law School has significantly fewer applicants than the

undergraduate program. The question of a practical standard is ripe for the

application of any moral goals. No one is held morally responsible for those

actions that they are incapable, in practice, of performing.

The other problem is the utilitarian presumption of the "compelling

interests" standard for applying racial categories in social/institutional

organizations. This is a very important issue because, historically, race as a

category was constructed for the purposes of advancing causes that produce

unjustifiable levels of pain for the lesser numbers of people. Justice O'Connor

rightly notes that race is "a highly suspect tool.'"[28]

If the merit of the University's Law School admissions process was its race-

neutral alternative, and if the category of race is a "highly suspect tool," then

why use race at all in the matter of admission procedures? Preferential

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[27] Bonevac, 612.
[28] Bonevac, 615.

treatment challenges the fundamental meaning of justice for many, in that it appears to treat people differently, based on some criteria that is irrelevant and arbitrary, like race. This is one of the moral concerns behind the motivation for the Michigan Civil Rights Initiative.

The current arguments for and against affirmative action programs are polarized as arguments for racial preferential treatment versus the reverse discrimination debate. Despite whether one agrees in practice or in principle with the aims of affirmative action programs, there remains a more convoluted problem to the overall discussion. This problem is the very use of the concept of race. The reverse discrimination argument claims that the category of race is employed with the result of causing the very injustices that it proposes to eradicate. This is the conceptual trap in "the pitfall of racial reasoning".[29] In their frustration, many have preferred to abandon racial terms and concepts altogether and to replace them with concepts of cultural designations. They believe that in doing this it is possible, as it were, "to kill two birds with one stone." After all, racial groups should be able to receive their justice as society advances its multicultural project. Whether this is really the case must stand the test of analysis, at minimum, and ultimately the test of time.

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[29] Cornel West, Race Matters, 2nd Vintage ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 2001), 35-49.

Legislative Presuppositions on Race: Essentialism or Constructivism

All legislative acts that attempt to address race relations are based upon two presuppositions that must be proven true before we can accept any legal practice, such as legislating race, *per se*. First, they presuppose that race is in fact a real entity. That is, advocates believe there are essential differences among the human species that allows them to be categorized as subspecies of races. This is an assumption that the critical studies discipline has challenged in the last few decades.[30] This action makes legislating race relations a kind of a factual moral problem; that is, we need to know the facts of the case in order to determine the correct course of action.

Second, racial legislation presupposes that the differences among humanity need legal protection in order to guard the proper ordering of society. Whether this difference is by divine order or by random natural selection, the relationships between races need human laws to secure their proper order. Let me be clear: the practice of legislating race relations has taken on more crude forms at times than at others. Nevertheless, in principle, all such laws take on the same logical form. This second presumption, that human difference needs to be instantiated in legal definitions, is contingent upon the truth of the first presupposition, in part. That is, if there are differences in race, then those differences must be for some purpose and therefore, God/nature expects us to

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[30] Iris Marion Young, "Unruly Categories: A Critique of Nancy Fraser's Dual Systems Theory," in Theorizing Multiculturalism: A Guide to the Current Debate, ed. Cynthia Willett (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 50-67.

understand the purposes of our differences with intention to pursue those purposes. This method of framing the problem of legislating race relations leads to a conflict-of-principles type of moral problem. Namely, in crafting a rule that will govern race relations, should the principle of liberty take priority over the principles of beneficence and justice, or should justice have priority over beneficence?

The subject of race, then, has not been neglected in contemporary discourse and thought. On the contrary, it is more likely that the topic of race is interjected into contemporary issues to the point of emotional exhaustion. This exhaustion has at least as much to do with our intellectual inability to understand the criteria, which justifies the idea of applying an ordinary concept of race.[31] According to Naomi Zack, it is easier to use the ordinary concept of race in practice than it is to understand it theoretically. The ordinary concept of race has a history of manifesting itself in gross inequality and exploitation of certain racial groups; the so-called African Americans of all people should know this well by now. In other words, a misunderstanding of the idea of race is fostered by the ordinary concept of race.[32]

In addressing the issue of racial injustice, the discipline of critical ideology has been employed, giving rise to a critical race theory. For some critical race theorists, the current race problem finds its basis in a past fact and the natural

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[31] Edgar T. Thompson and Everett C. Hughes, Race: Individual and Collective Behavior (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1958), 236.

[32] Naomi Zack, Race and Mixed Race (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), 9-18.

consequences that derive from it. Derrick Bell notes that one of the famous statements theorists love is from Thomas Jefferson: "The two races, equally free, cannot live in the same government."[33] Because racial prejudice is a past fact in America's history, we are left with certain inevitable social consequences. These consequences carry the legacy of social injustice based on race as well as the legacy of the myth of "race."

It follows that before one can enact a law governing race relations, it is necessary to have an entity called 'a race.' The recent discipline of critical studies questions attempts to determine racial categories.[34] In the article entitled, "The Social Construction of Race," Ian Haney Lopez writes of the genetic myth of racial origins:

> There are no genetic characteristics possessed by all Blacks but not by non-Blacks; similarly, there is no gene or cluster of genes common to all Whites but not to non-Whites. One's race is not determined by a single gene or gene cluster, as is, for example, sickle-cell anemia. Nor are races marked by important differences in gene frequencies, the rate of appearance of certain gene types. The data compiled by various scientists demonstrate, contrary to popular opinion, that intra-group differences exceed inter-group differences. This finding refutes the supposition that racial divisions reflect fundamental genetic differences.[35]

This verdict from biological scientific research begs the question: "from whence come the origins of the races, if not from genetic coding?" Haney Lopez

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[33] Derrick Bell, "Racial Realism—After We're Gone: Prudent Speculations on America in a Post-Racial Epoch," in Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge, ed. Richard Delgado (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995), 2.

[34] West, Prophesy Deliverance!: An Afro-American Revolutionary Christianity, anniversary ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 45.

[35] Ian F. Haney Lopez, "The Social Construction of Race," in Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge, ed. Richard Delgado (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995), 194.

continues shattering the myth of race and the attempts to justify the concept

based on phenotype:

> [T]he notion that humankind can be divided along White, Black,
> and Yellow lines reveals the social rather than the scientific origin of
> race. The idea that there exist three races . . . is rooted in the
> European imagination of the Middle Ages. . . . Along the way,
> various minds tried to fashion practical human typologies along the
> following physical axes: skin color, hair texture, facial angle, jaw
> size, cranial capacity, brain mass, frontal lobe mass, brain surface
> fissures and convolutions, and even body lice. As one scholar
> notes, "'[t]he nineteenth century was a period of exhaustive and-
> as it turned out-futile search for criteria to define and describe race
> differences.'"[36]

While I agree with Haney Lopez that race is a social construction, it is also

important to note that its roots go back as far as the Hamite myth of Genesis. In

this ancient story, Noah's three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, were understood

by Bible students to be the patriarchs of the racial groups from Asian, African,

and European peoples. The biblical social construction of race, it can be

argued, is based upon the typology that comes from the myth of color.[37] Once

again, Haney Lopez exposes the mythical factor of justifying race based upon

skin complexion:

> To appreciate the difficulties of constructing races solely by
> reference to physical characteristics, consider the attempt to
> define race by skin color. On the basis of white skin, for example,
> one can define a race that includes most of the peoples of

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[36] Ibid., 194.

[37] Cheikh Anta Diop, The African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality (New York: Lawrence Hill Books, 1974), 7-9. Diop argues for the etymological origin of the name Ham/Cham deriving from the Egyptian Kemit, designating the black race of the country. Furthermore, various Psalms refer to the same association, e.g., Psalm 78:51; 105:23, 27; 106:22. This means that even if the etymological origin of the name was not correct, it was still understood to be so by later biblical poets.

> Western Europe. However, this grouping is threatened by the subtle gradations of skin color as one moves south or east, and becomes untenable when the fair-skinned peoples of Northern China and Japan are considered.[38]

This statement by Haney Lopez closes the door to all the traditional indicators that we have ordinarily associated with race. None of the three methods, i.e., genotype, phenotype, and complexion, are proper measuring criteria for the intractable category we call race. This leads Haney Lopez to conclude:

> The rejection of race in science is now almost complete. In the end, we should embrace historian Barbara Field's succinct conclusion with respect to the plausibility of biological races: 'Anyone who continues to believe in race as a physical attribute of individuals, despite the now commonplace disclaimers of biologists and geneticists, might as well also believe that Santa Claus, the Easter Bunny and the tooth fairy are real, and that the earth stands still while the sun moves.'[39]

The critical race theory was first developed as a discipline by legal scholars and not scientists. Legal scholars, when they sought to address social-justice issues in present-day American society, saw the need to critique the limits of traditional law. Critical race theory questions the legal premises (the existence of race being one of those premises) that have gained a foothold as "givens" in liberal legal theory. As Richard Delgado sees it, the important themes of critical race theory are "the call for context, critique of liberalism, insistence that racism

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[38] Haney Lopez, 195.
[39] Haney Lopez, 194.

is ordinary not exceptional, and the notion that civil rights law has been more valuable to whites than to blacks-and others as well."[40]

This discipline now known as critical race theory is based on the assumption that culture constructs social reality for the benefit of society's elite groups. This social structure is established to protect their interests.[41] Because culture constructs social reality, the ways of being in society are changeable. Certain legal modes that pretend to be fixed and non-malleable can impede, rather than aid, the search for racial justice.[42] Alan Freeman's understanding of the motivation behind critical race theory scholarship is that traditional "legal doctrine has evolved to rationalize the irrelevance of results."[43] This means that justice is defined by fair procedures and not by equitable results. This amounts to justice without beneficence: process without product. If merely fair procedures and not equitable results are the aim of social justice, problems arise for despised racial groups seeking a retributive and distributive social justice in fact and not in simply theory.

It is very problematic that the racialized group referred to by the now-broken/discredited symbol of a 'Black' race is caught in a quagmire. On the one hand, the discriminated social group has a burden to expose the racial

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[40] Richard Delgado, ed., Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995), xv.
[41] Delgado, xiv.
[42] Delgado, xv.
[43] Alan D. Freeman, "Derrick Bell—Race and Class: The Dilemma of Liberal Reform," in Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge, ed. Richard Delgado (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995), 459.

category as a myth of social construction and reject being identified with the despised race. On the other hand, having been disadvantaged by the social injustices caused by being instantiated in racial terms, the group finds it necessary to embrace the racial identification in order to call for remedial action of justice that revalues the group through proper recognition and social uplift.

The so-called African-American group has historically been discriminated against in the United States on the basis of race. Now that laws have changed and rules appear more equitable, this group is put in the strange position of both seeking justice as a group for discriminatory practices in the past (that have put them at a current disadvantage) while at the same time rejecting the group identity that is predicated upon receiving the racial justice.

In principle and for the sake of truth, race as a concept must necessarily be exposed as a (myth of) social construction. This is a necessary condition for the goals of a "colorblind society" to be met.

In practice and for the sake of beneficial justice, race as a concept must necessarily be acknowledged as a broken symbol for the only human hope of social remediation. This suggests that the goals of "reparations" should be met. Herein lies the dilemma for Black equality and Black freedom. And here, too, exist the meeting grounds of the conflated options of business as usual and the usual business of relative justice, which historically seeks the lowest of several

ideals.[44] This agenda explores the place where the concept of distributive justice fights to share space with a concept of retributive justice.

Given that critical race theorists challenge the status quo legal doctrinal approaches to shaping social order, what options are available to reform and make positive changes for racial justice? A survey reading of texts on critical race theory leaves one with the impression of a call for radical re-visioning of the political resources and energy of society. This re-visioning combines the tactic of shame with a revaluing of a despised race.[45] It is important for the reader to be aware that we are now using the term 'race' as a socially constructed category.

Because the myth of race has been used in the past by one group of people to disenfranchise, discriminate, and dismiss another less powerful group of people, legal doctrines that are aimed at neutral procedures instead of equitable results are inadequate to the aims of racial justice in critical studies.[46]

Sketches of a Constructive Proposal

If race is socially constructed, then what are the implications of a theological anthropology that acknowledges race only as a social construct? What kind of theological anthropology goes along with aspects of our identity being socially constructed? In order to investigate this question, it is helpful to discover what a conversation between critical race theory and moral theology might look like.

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[44] Reinhold Niebuhr, <u>An Interpretation of Christian Ethics</u> (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1963), 84-102.
[45] Reinhold Niebuhr, 462.
[46] Reinhold Niebuhr, 460.

For a Christian, if there is no real difference among what we call races, then how would a constructive theology view laws that are enacted to govern race relations? Are they harmless nonsense or humanly crafted unjust structures that cause harms? According to Richard Rice, the open view of God, a middle-ground position between classical theism and process theism, is a resource that values both divine and human creative freedom by granting that God freely creates the world and that God's policy of restraint involves granting humankind genuine creative freedoms.[47] This divine gift of freedom also implies human responsibility. We value a vision of our story that embodies our ultimate aims for justice and freedom. For the Christian, this vision of reality is provided by the view of the beneficent God of the Judeo-Christian tradition.

Through the application of a theological anthropology, it is possible to locate the "anthropic principles" embedded in our conception of God. Today, there is emerging a new appreciation of a common humanity stubbornly reinforced by a shrinking pluralistic/multicultural global village. The nuclear threat and the possible annihilation of humanity make it imperative that we find a way to justly share our limited resources. There are seeds of this humanistic value in the biblical narratives, thus the importance to locate the moral principles within these seeds. Margaret Walker insightfully expresses the need for a humanist-based sensibility today when she writes:

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[47] Richard Rice, "Process Theism and the Open View of God: The Crucial Difference," in <u>Searching for an Adequate God: A Dialogue Between Process and Free Will Theists</u>, ed. John B. Cobb Jr. and Clark H. Pinnock (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 185.

> I think it is more important now to emphasize humanism in a technological age than ever before, because it is only in terms of humanism that the society can redeem itself. Even the highest peaks of religion's understanding must come in a humanistic understanding-the appreciation of every human being for his own spiritual way.[48]

In the past humans were able to view the otherness as a threat to cultural annihilation. There was no necessary burden to seek a common unity with otherness. What was needed at the time was a mobilizing cultural force to combat the other, in the name of God, who planned races to be separated by the divine laws of natural ordinance. Although there are tragic cases of genocide in regions around the globe today, the concept of genocide is a modern notion, such that even biblical societies did not view the demands of holy war as genocidal. If God could be theorized as the author of races, then God had a plan to keep them distinct. The unfortunate reality is that even the Judeo-Christian Holy Scriptures (an authoritative repository of spiritual wisdom) seems to hold to some of these categories of racially instantiated humanity.

Today, it is self-inflicted folly to limit otherness by laws resisting miscegenation, denying education, or to unjustifiably be selective with immigration. Nowadays there is the need to embrace the so-called other as an ally against the common dangers that threaten humankind's existence. In our day, we have the mandate of history to re-conceptualize, re-theorize, and re-

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[48] Charles Rowell, "An Interview with Margaret Walker," <u>Black World,</u> Feb. 25, 1975, 12.

evaluate who the God of the despised races really is: We ask instead, who is the

God of humanity?

The criterion of humanization—taking "human historical existence to be of

central importance; as something, therefore, for which humans must take full

responsibility"[49]—is rational and rooted, I believe, in the biblical tradition.

Whatever describes those matters of ultimate concern to us in turn help us to

locate the symbol for God. I suggest that for the purposes of social justice, Open

Theism, i.e., the view that God and humanity are in a dynamic, reciprocal

relationship, most adequately provides a definite description of God. This free-

will theistic view is one that locates ultimate concerns in the human aspirations

for beneficence, justice, and freedom. This helps in presenting a theological

critique of the current problems of legislating race relations.

A number of biblical passages that address the issue of racial justice

provide fruitful exegetical ground for a moral theology on race legislation. There

is the metaphor of humanity made in the image of God found in the Genesis

account of creation. There is also Yahweh's moratorium on holy war against the

nations in the book of Judges. It is especially interesting to read:

> I will no longer drive out before them any of the nations that Joshua
> left when he died . . . the Lord had left those nations, not driving
> them out at once, and had not handed them over to Joshua. . . .
> They were for the testing of Israel, to know whether Israel would

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[49] Gordon D. Kaufman, <u>God-Mystery-Diversity: Christian Theology in a Pluralistic World</u> (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 94.

> obey the commandments of the Lord, which he commanded their ancestors by Moses.[50]

One is led to wonder how race relations were legislated during the time of the judges and the monarchy. There is also the biblical motif of Israel, not defined as a race nor defined as a nation but defined, as 'a people.' The religious emotion found in these and other passages calls for new language that gives expression to our notions of a moral theology on race. This is how the Judeo-Christian God has been understood in the biblical account.

Although the biblical record is spotted with less than noble ethical norms, unscientific explanations of the universe, and even problematic theological claims, overall, the sacred writing provides a comprehensive meeting place sufficient for a Christian moral theologian to frame theological inquiry and moral discussion. In order to exhaust the biblical resource, a person's hermeneutic must be informed by critical scholarship. It is important to recognize that the Bible is a compilation of multiple-layered literary traditions. The biblical record is an anthology of Jewish and Christian literature that spans hundreds of years, uses a variety of literary genres, and evidences the work of multiple editors. It is because the many voices of various communities of a faith tradition are left in place in this rich artistic creation that the Bible is valued as the meeting place for theological reflection by Christians.

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[50] Judges 2:21-3:4 (NRSV).

Furthermore, Christian theological inquiry is in stark contrast to the Greek reflective thought of the "unmoved mover." The biblical writers understand God to be in relationship to humanity. The God of the Bible is fundamentally relational. The biblical record understands God as one who repents in Genesis 6:6, one who becomes displeased in Genesis 38:10, one who listens compassionately in Exodus 3:7-9, and one who possesses a host of other anthropomorphic relational characteristics. This humanistic picture of God is the vision of reality that is robust enough to motivate creativity in social action.

The biblical story of Jesus and the Canaanite/Syro-phoenician woman provides a disturbing possibility as we seek to understand the task involved in defining a social program that revalues a despised race. There are details about this story that suggest the hard labor involved in such a program of revisioning human difference for today. One factor is that both the Matthean and Markean passages preface Jesus' encounter with this woman by having him make a radical break with the legal tradition of Jewish dietary practices.[51] Like critical race theory today, this move questions whether the supposed legal tradition is nothing more than a cultural statement from an earlier era. Perhaps both the Mosaic codes and the United States Constitution should be understood not merely as legal expressions but also (and more importantly) as cultural expressions that require reinterpretation and re-expression from time to time.

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[51] Matt. 15:1-20; Mark 7:1-23 (NRSV).

Another detail of the story is the uncomfortable choice of language Jesus used in conversing with the woman. He begins by suggesting an ethnocentric posture. Matthew reports him to say, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 15:24). Both Matthew and Mark report him saying, "It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs" (Matthew 15:26 cf. Mark 7:27). Here again, moral theologians must force an honest and candid dialogue that includes disturbing myths and must be ready to hear painful discourse. This discourse will naturally revolve around the different stories of groups of people: those variable human aims at justice, fellowship (beneficence), and completeness (liberty).

The third detail that this story points to is how Jesus revalued this woman of a despised race by addressing the harms from which she sought relief. The story recognizes that justice without beneficence is form without substance. The woman wanted her demonized daughter to be made whole. In the end, all the talk about difference came down to the common conditions of all humanity: the death-producing conditions and the conditions of searching to understand our strange maladies. This point, the point of human need, is where moral theology must ultimately place its energy.

It might be that a program to repair government-sanctioned harms against a group must supplant a race-based affirmative action program. The language should be centered on the "descendants of the enslaved" in America rather than any racial designation. Maybe university and college admissions

programs can discard the language of "underrepresented minority" and replace it with a policy redressing the "laws limiting the education of the slaves," thereby setting back the descendents of the people who were enslaved. The focus ultimately must be on redressing the harms that were propagated (both legally and culturally) on a group of fellow humanity. By focusing on redressing the harms done and not on the myth of race, we can revalue a despised race and bring about social justice both distributively and retributively. This I propose as a picture of a responsible moral theology of liberation for a pluralistic society.

Critical race theory's call for a radical re-visioning of the political order of society, which combines the tactic of shame with a revaluing of a despised race, appears to be in part an incarnation of Christian doctrine and an enculturation of Christian practice. If it does not appear so, it is because the Christian Church in America has become what Cornel West terms Constantinian Christianity and has forsaken the prophetic Christianity of the kingdom of God.[52] The openness of God, that is, God's relationality, allows and calls for a radical re-visioning of the political order of society that combines the tactic of shame with revaluing despised humanity. Yet, finally, it searches out a language that speaks to the common conditions of human circumstances. Jesus speaks of the final judgment as a day when all humanity will be evaluated by how they treated God in the person of disadvantage.[53] This is in line with Karl Barth's book entitled

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[52] West, Democracy Matters, chap. 5.
[53] Matt. 25:31-46 (NRSV).

The Humanity of God.[54] This theme resonates with Jesus' most embraced self-identifying title: "son of humanity."

So then, what the human hand (i.e., human legal institutions) cannot move can be moved by the human heart (i.e., human relational influence).

Example Article and the Organic-Prophetic-Liberation Model: A Review

In concluding the entire project, I want to highlight how the above example article on the moral problem of legislating race relations utilizes the model of social engagement labeled organic-prophetic-liberation. The purpose of the example article is to be an alternative Adventist model for ethics that calls for a re-evaluation of the way models help to frame the moral problem.

First, let us review the choice of the moral problem of race. Although my personal wrestling with the issue of race partly informed my choice, all the same, according to the model, any context where concerns of oppression call for liberative energies to free humans from the harms and injustices of tyrannical forces is also a context that requires a prophetic voice and vision to speak to those concerns. Cries for liberty, justice, and beneficence can be heard on both sides of the issue of affirmative action legislation. The example article seeks to recognize those cries and hear those voices and seeks to begin to draw them into a new way of re-visioning the possibilities of life together.

Second, when we consider the prophetic elements in the article, those aspects come from the legal voices (both practitioners and scholars) in the

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[54] Karl Barth, The Humanity of God (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1960).

discipline of critical race theory. This discipline helps to provide a new vision and to open radical possibilities for the practice of social democracy over and against a kind of individualistic liberal democracy. These voices recognize the importance of the high priority that is given to beneficence as a moral principle in this social-justice endeavor. This is seen in the attentiveness to an equality of results rather than simply attending to the formal procedural concerns of an individualistic liberal democratic aim.

Decisively, the example article organically binds the moral imperative to the sacred text. The focus on the story of the Canaanite woman's encounter with Jesus illustrates how his dynamic view of covenant, his magnanimous view of the Kingdom of God, and his creation/redemption perspective of humanity work together to inform an arrangement of the moral principles of justice, beneficence, and liberty. Jesus, in his prophetic role, amends the covenantal relationship of the Jewish people so that it now included a covenant of *justice* for the Gentiles. In so doing, Jesus also recognizes that the *benefits* of God's Kingdom are to be shared by all in the newly defined moral community. Finally, he acts as the creator and redeemer of this woman's daughter by healing her of the oppression that constrained her *liberty*.

This article, as we can see, applies the organic-prophetic-liberation model to the moral problem of legislating race relations. There are no doubt limits to what options are still available to us on this moral problem. Yet the model helps to shift the focus of the discussion from the mythological issues of race to the real

life issues of harms that can be empirically measured and redressed if we have the will power.

Once again, let's examine how the three models we reviewed combine when they relate to the moral problem of legislating race relations.
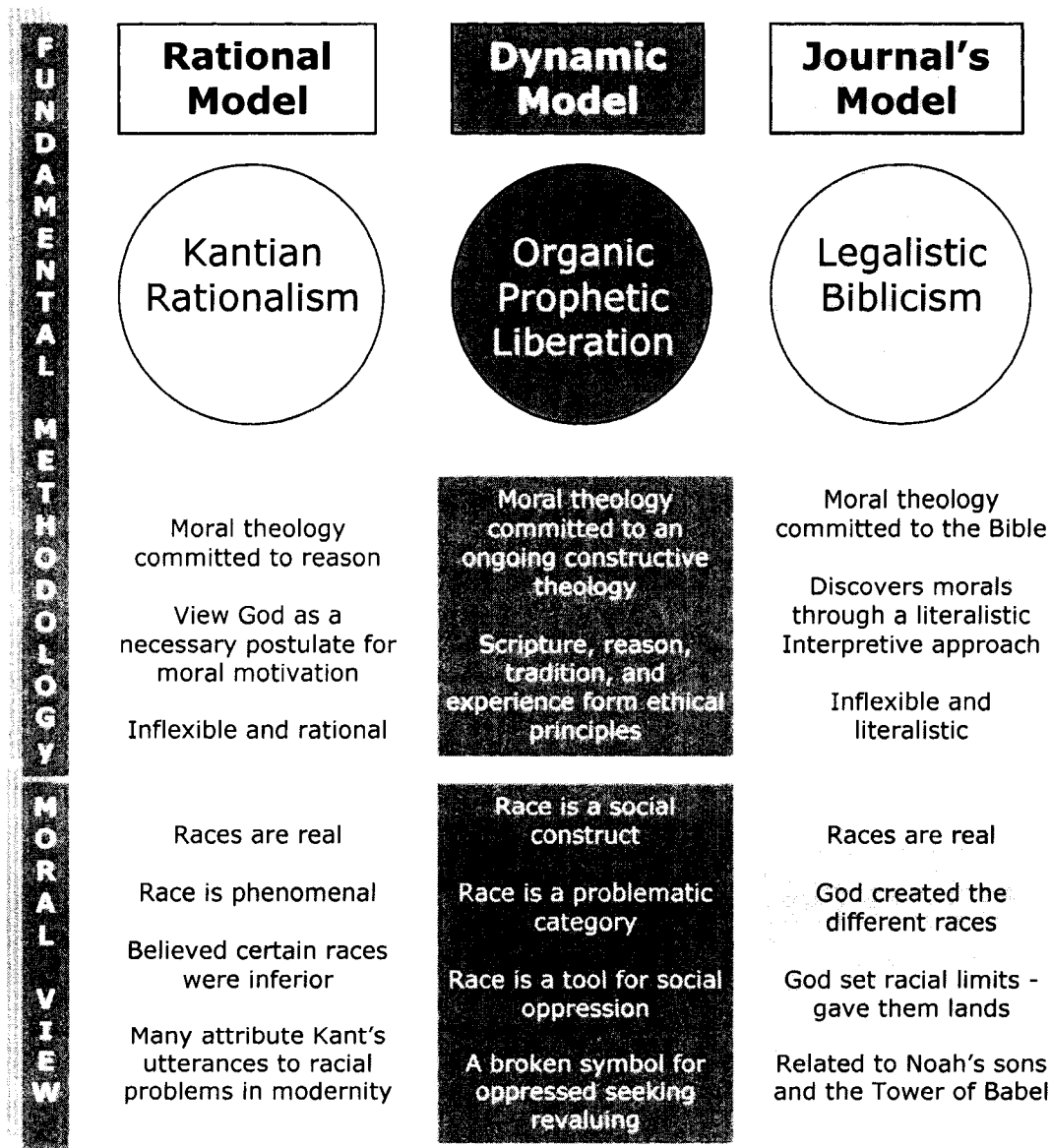
Rational Model	Dynamic Model	Journal's Model
Kantian Rationalism	Organic Prophetic Liberation	Legalistic Biblicism
Moral theology committed to reason View God as a necessary postulate for moral motivation Inflexible and rational	Moral theology committed to an ongoing constructive theology Scripture, reason, tradition, and experience form ethical principles	Moral theology committed to the Bible Discovers morals through a literalistic Interpretive approach Inflexible and literalistic
Races are real Race is phenomenal Believed certain races were inferior Many attribute Kant's utterances to racial problems in modernity	Race is a social construct Race is a problematic category Race is a tool for social oppression A broken symbol for oppressed seeking revaluing	Races are real God created the different races God set racial limits - gave them lands Related to Noah's sons and the Tower of Babel

The left vertical banner reads: FUNDAMENTAL METHODOLOGY MORAL VIEW

Figure 5. Re-examination of Project Models

Conclusion

Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote:

> The knowledge of good and evil seems to be the aim of all ethical reflection. The first task of Christian ethics is to invalidate this knowledge. . . . But if one does so notwithstanding, that can only mean that Christian ethics claims to discuss the origin of the whole problem of ethics, and thus professes to be a critique of all ethics simply as ethics.[55]

If this model is ethics simply as ethics, then it fails to be a Christian ethics. If it serves as a reminder to the disciple of Jesus that all of our activity is to be informed by a larger narrative, i.e., the sacred gospel story, then it is a discussion of "the origin of the whole problem of ethics." Yet the statement attempts to say more than what can be said about "the origin of the whole problem of ethics". It is also about the ultimate solution for this problem.

The solution is inseparable from the originating source of the eternal principles of the Kingdom of God. These moral principles are discoverable through the natural laws of reason and they are embedded in the sacred text of the Bible. It is argued that the eternal principles of beneficence, justice, and liberty, principles of God's universal reign, must always be seen in the light of the major themes of the Christian story and practiced within the heritage of the prophetic ministry of Israel if the moral theology is to be committed to the deep Adventist tradition. If the first task of Christian ethics is to invalidate the knowledge of good and evil, then the ultimate task is to hold out the Biblical

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[55] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Ethics (New York: Simon & Schuster, Touchstone, 1995), 21.

hope that our moral deficiencies are redeemed in the beneficent plan of God.
We are not left to the deficient remedies of the kingdoms of this world, not at all:
we find our rescue in the eternal kingdom of God.

What is next? What is needed in order to build upon this work? One task
is to outline strategies for various groups within the church organization who
share a concern for moral issues and to propose actions that are informed by the
organic-prophetic-liberation model of social engagement. One practical step
that can be taken to enrich the moral discourse within the Adventist tradition is
to write letters to the editors of Adventist journals that critique the moral issues
articles from within the framework of the organic-prophetic-liberation model.
There are also many educational materials that can be distributed to Adventist
communities by using the instruments of the journal publications, which are
already in place. These are just a few of the many resources available to use
when carrying out the important project of teaching the moral theological
model of organic-prophetic-liberation.

Appendix A

Moral Issue Articles Surveyed in <u>Ministry Magazine</u>

Note: The articles denoted with a * were selected because they had titles that suggested some relationship to ethical issues, but after review, proved to attempt a little more than a trivial treatment and justification of moral claims.

ARTICLES SURVEYED FROM 2001 ISSUES

1. "Serious about Secular Society: Christian Witness in the Secularized West?"

2. "The Secular Campus: Today's Macedonian Call"

ARTICLES SURVEYED FROM 2002 ISSUES

3. * "Holy Wars?"

4. * "Recovery and Pastoral Ministry"

5. "Really Knowing Our Children"

6. "Avoiding the Pitfalls of Prayer"

7. "What Does the Lord Require?"

8. "Pulpit and Politics"

9. "Pain"

10. * "The Gospel Commission Has Another Side"

11. "Deciding Between Dialogue and Debate"

12. "The Courage to Face Our Fears"

13. "Ordination in the New Testament"

14. "Should We Be Postmodern to Minister to Postmoderns?"

15. * "The Christian Man's Battle with His Sexuality"

16. "Loving the City"

17. "Patrons and Patronage in the Early Christian Church"

18. "9/11/2002: Preaching to Anxious Times"

19. * "Lifestyle Standards: A Middle Approach"

20. "Jesus' Subversive Sayings"

21. "In the Name of God? Pastoral Responses to Religious Terrorism"

22. "Conflict Can Be Healthy for a Church"

23. "The Perils of Pursuing Success"

24. "Living It. That's What It's All About!"

25. * "Church Discipline the Redemptive Way"

26. "Adventist Identity in a Changing World"

27. * "What are We Teaching Our Children"

28. "Being Friends With Postmoderns"

29. "Evangelism and Interfaith Relations"

ARTICLES SURVEYED FROM 2003 ISSUES

30. "Preaching: The Challenge of a Christ-centered and Holistic View of Humanity"

31. "Meeting the Secular Mind in Uncertain Times"

32. "Can the Church Be Relevant and Thrive? (Part 1)"

33. "The Folly of Mixing Religious and Political Vision"

34. * "Viewpoint: Listen and Love: How Do You Relate to Gay People?"

35. * "Ethics for Twenty-first Century Clergy"

36. "Adventists and Ecumenical Conversation"

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37. "The Pre-Advent Judgment: Fact or Fiction?" (Part 1)

38. * "Every Church Can Help Smokers Quit"

ARTICLES SURVEYED FROM 2004 ISSUES

39. *"Sexual Misconduct in Ministry: A Biblical Sketch of Pastoral Identity"

40. "The High Road of Christian Reconciliation"

41. "Justly Integrating Covenant, Law, and Sabbath"

42. "The Covenants: A Developmental Approach"

43. "Ellen G. White: Prophetic Voice for the Last Days"

44. "Paul, Law, and Covenants"

45. "The Pre-Advent Judgment: Fact or Fiction?" (Part 2)

46. "Response to Dale Ratzlaff"

47. "Preaching with ERIC: Four Sermon Essentials"

48. * "Unforbidden Fruit"

49. * "Pornography: the Journey to Healing"

50. "Fellowship, Our Greatest Witness"

51. * "Requiem and Resurrection for a Fallen Brother"

52. * "Sexuality in Ministry: the Pastor, Sexual Sin, and the Bible"

53. "The Law is our Anchor, Jesus is the Wind in Our Sails"

54. * "Flirting With the Enemy"

55. "The More Abundant Life"

56. * "Sexual Misconduct in Ministry: Victims and Wounds"

57. "Preaching Beyond Modernism"

58. * "Fallen Pastors: Redemptive Responses"

59. * "Teen Smoking: The Church Can Help"

ARTICLES SURVEYED FROM 2005 ISSUES

60. * "Dealing with a Fallen Pastor"

61. "Ritual for Cleansing After Hearing Gossip"

62. * "Did the Apostolic Council Set Aside the Sabbath? (Part 1)"

63. * "Corporately Facing Up to Sexual Infidelity"

64. * "A Re-fellowshipping Process for the Morally Fallen: An Administrative Approach"

65. * "The Apostolic Council and the Ten Commandments (Part 2)"

66. "Political Reality and the Holy Spirit: When Change Confronts the Church"

67. * "A House of Prayer for All Peoples: A Vision of Inclusion"

68. "Tending Our Own Spiritual Fires"

69. "Modern versus Postmodern Adventism: The Ultimate Divide?"

70. * "Pastors and Sexual Infidelity: A Response to Miroslav Kis"

71. * "Pastors and Sexual Misconduct"

72. * "The Challenge and Future of Urban Ministry: the Case of White Memorial Church"

73. "The Greatest of These is Love"

74. "The Scapegoat and the Law of Malicious Witness"

75. "Leading without Fear"

76. * "The Weapons of Our Warfare"

Appendix B

Moral Issue Articles Surveyed in <u>Message Magazine</u>

Note: The articles denoted with a * were selected because they had titles that suggested some relationship to ethical issues, but after review, proved to attempt a little more than a trivial treatment and justification of moral claims.

ARTICLES SURVEYED FROM 2001 ISSUES

1. * "An Epidemic of Fatherlessness"

2. "The Beginning of Sorrows?"

ARTICLES SURVEYED FROM 2002 ISSUES

3. * "Living the Christian Life"

4. * "Poster Child for Separation of Church and State"

5. * "Twin Towers of Tragedy and Triumph"

6. * "Who Deserves Military Justice?"

7. * "Sins of the Fathers"

8. * "A Door of Hope"

9. * "A Nonpartisan God—Does He Play Favorites?"

ARTICLES SURVEYED FROM 2003 ISSUES

10. * "Forever in the Path"

11. *"Unfolding a Compelling Option"

12. * "A New Rule"

13. * "Coping with Job Loss in the Aftermath of September 11, 2001"

14. * "Modern Day Donkeys"

15. * "Becoming a Church that Gives Life"

ARTICLES SURVEYED FROM 2004 ISSUES

16. "A Kingly Deed of a Forgotten Hero"

17. * "Please, God—Not AIDS"

18. "Leper in the Pews"

19. * "Will the Real Terrorists Please Stand Up"

20. * "The Bridge To Freedom: Breaking the Chains of Pornography"

21. * "Between the Sexes: In the Beginning"

22. * "The Naked Truth"

23. * "The Christian and Drugs—The Inner View, Part 4"

ARTICLES SURVEYED FROM 2005 ISSUES

24. * "Abuse and the Christian Church—The Inner View, Part 5"

25. * "Cocaine, The Devil's Candy"

26. "How to Know if Your Child is Using Drugs"

27. "Overcoming One Bad Habit"

28. "Inner View, Part 6—Land of the Free?"

29. * "Terrorism of a Different Sort"

30. * "Same-sex Marriages: A Liberation or a Desecration?"

31. * "The Inner View, Part 7—Unmarried Christian and Parent"

32. * "Who Said There has to Be a Man and a Woman?"

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